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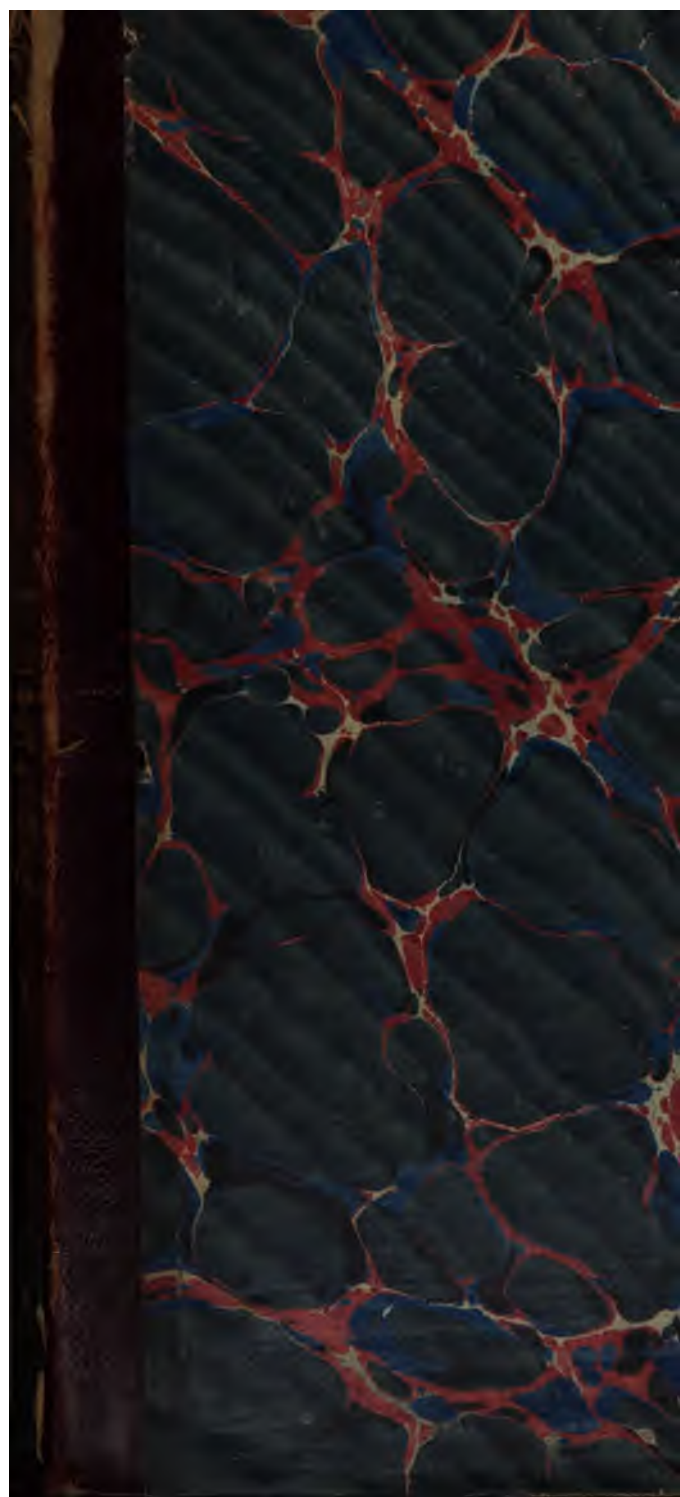
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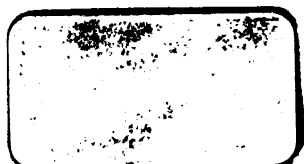
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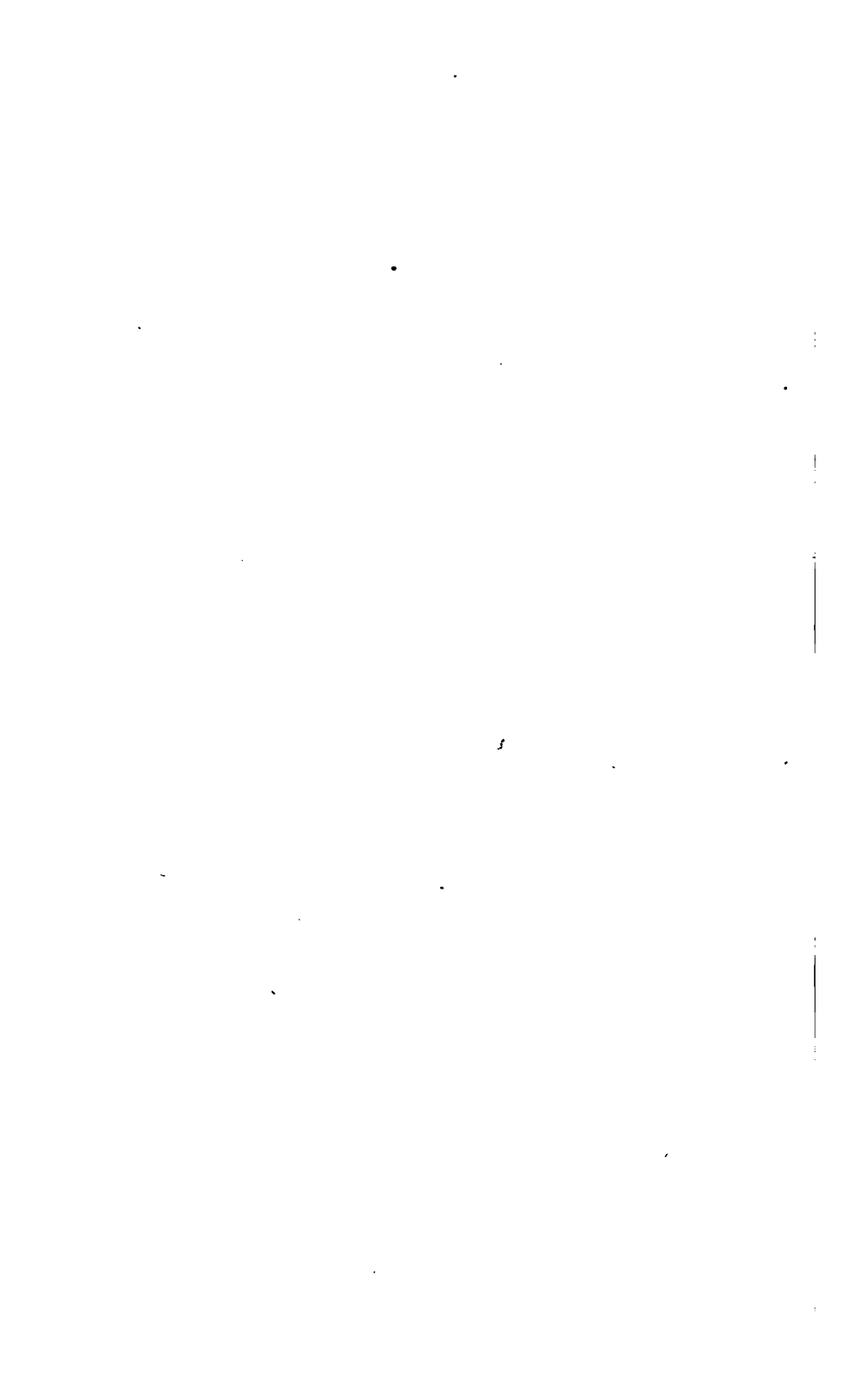
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B O O K I I I .

M O N T A G U .

VOL. II.

B



ELSIE SEYMOUR.

CHAPTER I.

THE VILLA.

WHEN Rome had subdued the world her nobles built themselves villas and palaces after the models of the fairest works of her subject races and stored them with the varied products of the most tasteful nations. The Greeks, on the other hand, were less copyists than inventors, and their taste arose as a spontaneous produce of their soil. When Hadrian constructed his

villa and gardens at Tibur, he had perhaps imbued his fancy with the ideals of Athens, but his mind was Roman and not Athenian, since, in his very partiality to Greece, he showed himself wanting in the Hellenic quality of nationality and self-sufficiency in art.

Although we English are more of Romans than Greeks in the matter of taste, yet we do possess a native art, as much our own as our language and our laws, for though none of them are strictly original, they are nevertheless national. Even, as the compound of Saxon and Norman which we speak, or the church which S. Augustine planted and the bishops of the sixteenth century reformed, so is our pointed architecture a native style, not spontaneous (like the art of Greece,) but as national as our language, our laws, or our church.

Like the church herself, while the pointed architecture overspread western Christendom, it possessed in each land certain local peculiarities. The forms adopted in our own country

became English and developped into a domestic style—the Elizabethan—which is found in no other land. But, although we are not without a homebred art, we do not limit ourselves to this, and may claim to be considered, as far as we pursue the subject of taste, catholic rather than exclusive in our sympathies.

These prefatory remarks will have wearied such of our readers as were already of opinion that Englishmen might build pagodas and Saracenic halls, or enliven their grassy parks with Grecian temples and Italian towers, but to those purists who deplore the admixture of style, it may be some consolation to reflect upon the analogy presented by our language, literature and laws.

In the wildest and most picturesque part of the county of Surrey—as wild, to all appearance, as the highlands of Scotland and as lovely as the fairest portion of Devonshire, lay a wooded ravine through which a clear streamlet pursued its course over pebbles and among

rocks. The vegetation, although not indigenous, was well suited to the character of the glen. Its steep sides, even down to the rocky margin of the rivulet, were clothed with evergreens of the most luxuriant growth. The arbutus, bay and laurustinus formed a rich undergrowth, overhung by a variety of the pine, cypress and ilex, of which the foliage blended harmoniously in this retreat.

A narrow pathway following the course of the stream was flanked by heather, berberus and other dwarf shrubs, which filled the intervals between the taller evergreens. On pursuing this pathway, the glen seemed to contract and the distant sound of falling waters to become at each moment more distinct. There was a bend in the ravine which terminated abruptly in a steep cliff, whence the waters of the streamlet fell in a cascade. These issued from a fissure in the sand rock, which was surmounted by a terrace and the fissure traversed by an arch. Above the terrace rose the towers

of a campanian villa, rivalling the loveliest productions of Italian architecture and harmonizing admirably with the scenery and vegetation of the valley.

A picturesque ascent led from the ravine to the terraces and, from these, the view of the glen beneath, ensconced in its rich verdure of pine and cypress and with its sound of plashing waters, was altogether unlike the commonplace of an English landscape; and still more piquant, from their novelty, were the gardens and the *palazzo* which surmounted them.

The edifice was not simply an Italian villa, indeed it would be hard to find anything like it in modern Italy, for it was the country house of an ancient Roman, reconstructed from the paintings of such buildings upon the walls at Pompeii itself. There are, among the frescoes of the Campanian city, designs of country houses with their towers and colonnades and, from these, the German architect had framed his plan. A graceful portico with marble

pillars, raised upon a terrace base, faced the garden and communicated with a walk ending in a semicircular seat, upon which were painted arabesques of Tritons and Nereids. Beneath the colonnade were also frescoes upon the panels of the wall; and the terraces (laid out with flower beds and cropped evergreens) were enlivened with Hermes and statues by the best sculptors of Rome. Of these there were three ranges and the balustrades of the lowest overhung the precipice of the ravine. Upon the second was a fountain of which the waters were so conducted as to issue from a lion's mouth into a basin upon the third. A graceful campanile rose at one extremity of the edifice half enshrouded in cypresses, while a stone pine with its mushroom head overshadowed the adjacent roof. The rich verdure of these trees gave an Italian effect to the building, with its projecting roofs tiled after the fashion of the south, a fashion unchanged since the days of Pompeii.

Striking as was the exterior of this abode, still more so, as an artistic achievement, was its internal arrangement. The living rooms were built around two courts of which the *impluvia* were closed with glass, the construction of the roofs being adapted to modern comfort. The principal court was surrounded by marble colonnades and the walls painted in panels divided by arabesques, and varied with niches containing statues by Tenerani, Wyatt, and Gibson. Curtains separated this peristyle from the chamber, where, amid his books and papers, Cecil Montagu sat reading.

That handsome man, with his black sparkling eyes and symmetrical face, needed nothing but a tunic around him to complete the illusion and become the Alcibiades of this almost Athenian retreat.

A pile of letters, and an unfinished manuscript lay upon the table beside him, while he held in his hand a book of reference which he was searching for a passage to transcribe into

an essay for one of the reviews. The classical atmosphere seemed to inspire the pen of this accomplished scholar and to render the English which he wrote terse and mellifluous as the language of Athens. His paper was upon art, and he wrote as one who both appreciated its beauties and its mysteries, and combined the feelings of a poet with the knowledge of a critic. After writing for awhile he re-perused his production and then, throwing himself back in his chair, took up one of the letters lying upon the table.

"She will be here to-day," thought he: "she would make a fair mistress for this shrine of Apollo, or a divinity, rather, for this Temple of Athenè. I wish I could fall in love with her: so beautiful, so clever, so full of genius! she is created for this place. Her exquisite singing would enliven its silent courts. There are so few English women who could ever appreciate my tastes and feelings; my love of beauty and worship of art! She sees Athens

as I do. She adores Italy, revels in taste, is sensitive to every expression of loveliness and yet, I love her not. I cannot love her. Why not? Heaven knows! That half-taught, natural, unsophisticated dark-eyed English girl, Kate Elliott, interests me a thousand times more than Elsie Seymour, and yet she would scarce know what to make of half my fads and fancies. She might want to carpet the peristyle, hang up chintz curtains in the gynæcæum and Zeus knows what besides! While Elsie would be singing to the notes of her kithara, the other might be peopling my atria with squalling brats and casting up accounts like an English housewife! How shocking!"

As such thoughts crossed the mind of Montagu he smiled, and presently arose to give orders to his servants, before he went forth for his morning's ride.

Mounted upon a steed scarcely less beautiful than the Arab which met with the misfortune

at Alfreton, Montagu sauntered through the tinted groves and descended into the ravine which has already been described.

There was something in the tints of autumn which grated upon his temperament, for although, as an artist, he could not fail to admire them, or, as a poet, to recognize their charms, he loved better the smiling verdure of spring, with its prospect of summer yet to come. He was glad to leave the brown beech and thorns for the perpetual verdure of the arbutus and cypress. When he found himself in his favourite ride and looked up at his villa basking in the sun, he felt almost as happy as when he had wandered alone in the Abruzzi or sauntered upon the shore of Naples.

His mind was intent upon its own creations and he revelled in the beautiful under all its forms. In seeking to render Thornwood an embodiment of his ideal, he had selected a lovely site, not beyond the reach of London society and had laid out the grounds with ex-

quisite skill, erecting a villa fit for a Pericles or a Lorenzo, where he was wont to entertain a coterie of artists and literati. The hours of solitude which intervened between his landscape-gardening and his moments of social intercourse, were employed in literary pursuits. He wrote upon the philosophy of art in a manner unrivalled in the periodicals of the day and could compose a romance or a drama to cope with any author of the time.

He had only just returned from visiting his relations in the north of England, having reinstated himself in his villa on the preceding evening. It was rarely that he found himself alone, but had already filled his house for the day to which the narrative reverts.

Montagu loved to muse upon the creations of his fancy and his favourite projects, but never allowed his day-dreams so to absorb his mind as to divert it from the present. He could command his imagination and so turn his thoughts from one theme to another, as to em-

brace many things at once and accomplish each well. As he imbibed the fragrance of the day and enjoyed the scene, he was no less attentive to the paces and movements of his horse and able, meanwhile, to plan fresh openings in the wood and improvements in the surrounding landscape. Nor was he unmindful of his morning studies, his article upon æsthetics, and withal, forgot not his expected guests, and among them the beautiful Elsie.

From Elsie his thoughts turned to Katharine. He had determined to invite Lady Elliott and her daughter, and was planning the accomplishment of his scheme. A correspondence with Frank had paved the way for an introduction to Lady Elliott, and he purposed accompanying her son to Brighton when the latter should have spent a few days at the villa.

While he thus pondered his attention was aroused by the sound of footsteps and, after a turn in the path, he found himself in the presence of Frank Elliott, walking with a railway

wrapper over his arm, and an umbrella in his hand.

"Ha! Elliott! I am delighted to see you."

"I'm afraid I am trespassing," replied Frank after the usual salutations: "the fact is I came to the wrong station and have had to walk across. This way was pointed out to me as being the shortest."

"And your luggage? I will send for it."

"I left it in charge of a porter who promised to convey it safely to Thornwood."

"Are you from London?"

"Yes; I left my sister there with my uncle and aunt, but she starts for Brighton to-morrow and I purpose meeting her at the station at one and proceeding with her."

"What! And not give me a longer visit than that? You might arrange to stay a few days. I am expecting the Seymours, whom you know, and Lord and Lady Charles de Vere and some others whom I think you would like. Could not your sister be induced

to change her plans? does she travel alone to Brighton with her maid?"

"No—aunt Fortescue, my mother's sister, is going with her."

"Then I have arranged it all. Write to your aunt and sister to come here for a night, on their road to Brighton, and also inform Lady Elliott in order that she may not expect them. I want your sister to see how entirely the Arab has recovered and am no less anxious that she should make acquaintance with Thornwood. The carriage shall meet them at the station and they will be here in time for luncheon." Montagu saw that Frank hesitated to accept his proposal and artfully continued: "besides, if you will stay until friday there is a good chance of your meeting our friends the Mordens. I saw them in town and they promised, if they could so arrange it, to come for one or two days. Miss Morden is with them, but I am not certain whether Frederick will come."

Frank no longer hesitated on his own ac-

count, but was still doubtful whether his sister could be induced to accept the invitation.

"Come! I think we shall arrange it," said Montagu.

"But my sister's plans may possibly prevent her coming."

"In that case she can go on with you by a later train. At all events she would lunch here. You might still accompany her to Brighton and return to meet our friends the Mordens."

This proposition seemed to simplify matters. There could be no objection, he thought, to Kate's coming with her aunt to luncheon, when, suddenly, fresh scruples seemed to seize him. After all would Kate or her aunt Fortescue approve of this visit? Montagu perceived the working of these doubts.

"Without piquing myself too much upon Thornwood, I hope you may be sufficiently pleased with it to deem it worthy of a passing

visit from your sister. There are some pictures and statues which I trust may meet with her approval. But you shall judge for yourself."

Meanwhile Montagu had turned his horse's head, and they had been sauntering towards the house. At this moment the prospect of the abrupt termination of the glen, crowned with the villa and enlivened by the foaming waters of the cascade, burst upon their view.

Frank, who had not failed to admire the wild beauty of the ravine and its vegetation, was overcome with delight when a turn of the path brought them in sight of this unexpected prospect. Anything so un-english in the county of Surrey and within an easy journey of London was inconceivable to his imagination, and he stood contemplating it for a moment in silent rapture.

"Do you like the situation of my house, perched up there like an eyry?" enquired Montagu.

"It is indeed most lovely! I could fancy myself at Tivoli."

"I think, perhaps, you will consider the view from above still more striking. That is pure nature, while here you have the combination of nature and art."

"Yes, but how well they are combined."

"The fusion does undoubtedly produce the happiest effects. There is nothing so beautiful as architecture in a landscape."

There was a more direct way to the terraces than the ride by which Montagu had descended and, by this he advised Frank to proceed, telling him that he would shortly join him in the gardens above. Frank followed the way pointed out to him, and found himself ascending a steep staircase in the rock, with occasional openings overlooking the precipice below. In a few minutes he was in the gardens facing the Campanian villa.

Before Montagu joined him he had time to

wander among the parterres and contemplate the beauties of the place. The painted portico, statues, and fountains; the empty flower-beds enlivened with patterns of coloured sand bordered with clipped box, and, lastly, the exquisite prospect of the glen with its pines and cypresses. "Kate should see this beautiful place," thought he, "and Emmeline too if she cares for me! (I do not think that Montagu has any fancy for her.) To meet her in such a paradise! what happiness! oh! my sister ought to come and stay here for two or three days. I am sure my mother could never object if my aunt were with her;" such were Frank's reflections when Cecil Montagu joined him.

After a short walk round the gardens, during which he left Frank to discover the beauties of the locality, he conducted him into the house where his enchantment was complete. Never had he seen anything more exquisite

than this restoration of a classical ideal and it seemed to surpass even the dreams of his imagination.

When he had admired the atria and the surrounding chambers, Frank was not sorry to find himself in the dining-room (for we will drop the classical name in the presence of an excellent modern *cuisine*) with a good luncheon on the table.

"Are you inclined to ride this afternoon, or will you walk?" enquired Montagu when his guest had lunched. "The post does not leave until seven, and I am anxious to make a favourable impression upon you before you write to your sister."

"I am sure I shall do all in my power to persuade her to come," replied Frank unguardedly.

"Will Lady Elliott be much disappointed at the delay of a few days in her return? You must write and tell her that Miss Elliott will meet Lady Charles de Vere, Mrs. and Miss

Seymour and, I hope also, her friends, the Mordens. At all events one day's visit can be no great delay and she will receive Lady Elliott's answer on the following morning."

This reminder concerning his letter to his mother recalled a thought to Frank's mind which he had been unknowingly struggling to suppress, and this was the notion that she as well as Katharine would be certain to feel a delicacy in this visit to a bachelor's house. Montagu read all these scruples upon Elliott's face.

"Do you think that Miss Elliott and your aunt will feel any hesitation in staying here?"

"I don't know. You see, my mother expects them to-morrow."

"That is to say that there is a certain difficulty in a young lady's coming to stay in a bachelor's house. That is true! Well, what is to be done? I long to hear your sister's comments upon my villa, and you see that other

ladies do venture to visit my house, in spite of my having the misfortune to be a bachelor. Tell me, when does Lady Elliott propose leaving Brighton?"

"She talked of going to London this week," returned Frank, who partly caught at the suggestion.

"Could she have come to-morrow, had we made arrangements in time?" enquired Montagu: "she might have hastened her journey and taken this on the way to London."

"That certainly might have been done, but I fear it is too late now."

"It is not too late!" exclaimed Montagu looking at his watch; "if you are inclined to accompany me to Brighton this afternoon, we can be back in time for dinner at half past seven."

There was no resisting Montagu's requests and, in a few minutes, the phaeton was at the door and they were soon proceeding at a swift

pace to a railway station on the Brighton line. Frank had scarcely time to admire the *riant* country through which they drove and was even prevented reflecting upon their strange errand by his companion's lively conversation.

So rapid had been their journey that Frank's thoughts were scarcely collected when they drove up to Lady Elliott's house. Such had been the charm of Montagu's society that Frank felt as much at home as if he had been with an old school-fellow or college companion. He introduced him to his mother and left him to account, as he was best able, for their unexpected appearance.

"I am come to make a singular request, Lady Elliott ; a request in which I am sure your son will second me. I am anxious to press you and Miss Elliott to visit Thornwood."

Lady Elliott turned and gave, as it were, an involuntary look towards the door of the adjoining room.

"You do not know my elder sister Mary," said Frank. "Tell me, mother, how is Mary? I will go and see her."

He rose and Montagu resumed.

"No indeed! your son has corrected me. I have only met your second daughter. She and your son were staying at Alfreton. Now, I am expecting Lady Morden and her daughter on Friday, and I wish to persuade you to meet them."

Lady Elliott was a kind hearted but reserved person, who was more easily managed by her son Frank, than by her daughters. She sat rather erect and listened with apparent indecision to all that Mr. Montagu said. She had heard of him from both her children and vividly recalled the account of her daughter's accident with his favourite Arab. They had not failed to praise the kind manner in which he had behaved, and had thus paved the way for the admiration with which she seemed instantly inspired towards him.

"I am expecting my daughter and sister to come to me to-morrow from London."

"Not if you will accept our proposition, and come to Thornwood. In that case, could it not be arranged for them to join you there? Your son is starting for the East, and I have asked some travellers to meet him who will be able to give him much information. It is a pity he should miss seeing them and, at my house, he will be within easy reach of London."

"Oh, yes! If it were not for my sister, Mrs. Fortescue."

"But why should she not come to Thornwood with Miss Elliott?"

Montagu's persuasive voice was probably more effective than his mere words, and Lady Elliott seemed already to be yielding when Frank returned, accompanied by a tall, pale, sickly-looking girl, whom he presented to Montagu as his sister, Mary.

Her eyes had the same sweet expression as Katharine's, but there was a certain languor

and want of vivacity which robbed the countenance of half its loveliness.

Scarcely had she entered ere Montagu discovered that she had already been won over to the project by Frank's arguments. Thus fortified, he felt confident of success and, after a brief onslaught from the trio, Lady Elliott succumbed, and a letter was despatched to London to appoint a meeting at Thornwood on the morrow.

Their victory achieved, the two companions returned and reached Thornwood in time for dinner.

CHAPTER II.

ELSIE.

CONSPICUOUS among the guests at Thornwood was Elsie Seymour who felt completely in her element in that beautiful Pompeian Villa, which seemed to realize some of her earliest dreams. She admired the house, and not less its proprietor, whose fascinating manners, exquisite taste, and refined and delicate wit had not failed to excite her imagination if not completely to win her sympathy.

The evening had passed delightfully, and

every one was in raptures with Elsie's singing and conversation. She was the Aspasia, or the Corinne, of the artistic mansion.

The second peristyle, which Montagu was wont, in semi-irony, to call the *Gynæceum*, was, in truth, fitted up as a music-room and, like the other hall decorated with frescoes and statues. The piano was placed in a recess opening out of this enclosed court and, making, as it were, one room with it.

Here Elsie had sung, and displayed her perfect knowledge of art. It had been an evening of triumphs and, when she retired to her room, she felt that she had made an impression upon the whole of that assembly.

Her maid had left her, and she sat musing before the fire. She knew that she had been intoxicated by the flattering enthusiasm of her audience and sighed for philosophic calm to concentrate her thoughts upon the scheme of her London sisterhood. Ever and anon, as she endeavoured to fix her attention upon the

requirements of the humble society in 'Bloomsbury, she was met by the recollection of the marble peristyle as her own voice echoed through its colonnades, or as Montagu's graceful compliments thrilled in her ears. The contrast between the beautiful mansion, the sanctuary of art, and the squalid poor of London was too striking to be admitted at the same season in the same heart.

"Could the accomplished Montagu," thought she, "appreciate my scheme for the poor? Perhaps not. And if—if perchance I were to become the mistress of Thornwood,—for he admires and courts me and I have not discouraged him—then what would become of my House of Mercy and my Sisters? He may possibly—nay, he must, if he weds me, tolerate my views of beneficence. To-morrow I will tell him of my fancies, I am certain he will approve, or seem to approve. But, nevertheless, if I marry, I can never be to that institution, what I should be unmarried. I shall

have other calls and duties—other ties. It is only two days since I was determining to give up society and become the superior of my society, and now alas! I am absorbed in this gay scene—this seductive worldliness! Besides, after all, why not combine the two? We are not nuns of the middle ages. Our work is adapted to the civilized present, rather than the barbarous past. We are reviving what is excellent of former times but moulding it to the sympathies of the nineteenth century. Our religion is not the superstition of other days, but the enlightened belief of sages and the simple suggestion of reason. Why cramp ourselves with monkish rules, so long as we can extract from them what is true for all time? And yet, it is certainly of the essence of such rules to discard too much social or worldly entanglement. I feel that I am too fond of admiration, and am seldom in society without being led to perceive its dangers and to long for seclusion. It is a mistake to speak

of quiet and unimaginative persons being unfitted for society for they alone are safe amidst its allurements: it is to the children of fancy that the world is dangerous. My enjoyment of it consists entirely in applause, and vanity becomes the food of my soul. Montagu fosters my weakness. It would require a Herbert Lisle to counteract it."

Upon such thoughts as these she fell asleep, and awoke the following morning with a mingled feeling of pleasure and dread. She was elated with the prospect of the coming day and Montagu's homage, but secretly dreaded the alienation of her heart from the more reasonable course which she had prescribed to herself and the correspondence (now extensive and increasing) concerning the sisterhood, which she feared would be neglected amid the frivolities of Thornwood. She knew that she was balancing between her scheme and her vanity, the institution and Cecil Montagu.

Upon raising the window-blind her eyes

fell upon the sunlit prospect of the beautiful glen with its terrace foreground, and the distance of Hampshire hills. The dark depths of the ravine contrasting with the green pines and cypresses clothing its sides now lighted by the morning sun, offered an enchanting spectacle. She longed to wander through its mazes and, forgetting her nursing sisters, the thought of Montagu prevailed.

Among the guests was a literary *fainéant*, a pleasant companion, by name George Estcourt. This man continued to write occasional articles in the reviews and had formerly earned some fame by the publication of one or two biographies. His works were not without a degree of merit and it was, perhaps, more lucky for himself than for the public when, one day, he inherited a tolerable fortune, which converted him from an active into a passive *littérateur* and thenceforth, instead of writing he haunted men of letters and talked literature in the salons. His occasional arti-

Were it not for the sunshine I should have felt it painfully. To awaken in an Athenian chamber and look out upon an English fog, is a contrast too violent for my nerves," said Elsie laughing.

"An Athenian winter is not without its frosts and cold," pleaded Montagu "besides I have adopted English casements and fireplaces. With these additions you would not debar me from the choice of a classical architecture?"

"On the contrary, I am in raptures with it," exclaimed Elsie.

"I assure you," ventured Mrs. Seymour, "that Elsie always quotes Thornwood as her beau ideal of excellence.

"Oh yes! But I am not sure," returned Elsie, piqued at her mother's flagrant attempts to win her the good opinion of Montagu, "if I were building a house, whether I would not select an English in preference to a classical style."

"I once indulged in the same dream about a

national style," replied Stobieski, "but I never could discover it. If you mean the aboriginal style of the country, I have seen nothing beside Stonehenge which claims that merit, and I doubt whether even that ruin is genuinely so. I imagine it to be Carthaginian, for it certainly resembles some Punic ruins which I have seen at Krendi in Malta. If my theory be correct upon the point, the English can never have had an architecture of their own. The barbarisms of the aboriginal Britons were supplanted by the polished structures of the Romans, and in this very neighbourhood I have seen the remains of a Roman villa constructed as nearly as possible upon the plan of this. Now the most that can be said for the Stonehenge theory is that the monument affords a notion of the British temples. Of domestic architecture there are no remains in your country nearly so early as these Roman villas, and may they not, therefore, claim to be your oldest specimens of

English style as you term it? is not that also your opinion Mr. Montagu?"

"It is certain, I think," rejoined Montagu "that the Romans built villas in England, and that those generally resembled, in their plan, the houses of Pompeii. This being the case I have copied the oldest domestic construction, known in England."

"Yes certainly," added Stobieski, "and you have good authority for believing it to be that which is best adapted to oppose the rigours of the climate, since it was that which an Italian people, sensitive to your chilly damp air, made use of. Heated with hot-air-flues, something like Doctor Reid's modern invention, the old Roman villa was in every way superior as a protection against cold to the feudal castle, or to the Tudor and Elizabethan manor-house. In the days of chivalry the inhabitants were more hardened to the climate than the Romans had been. But surely, our own luxurious habits, in the nineteenth century, give us

more sympathy with them than with the Goths and Normans, in matters of comfort at least. I am sure Miss Seymour must agree with me in this?"

"I do not, however see," returned Elsie, "that, because the Romans conquered England before the days of the English, that, therefore, their architecture is to be considered most national. Pray, is the Latin language more national than our own, and yet it was spoken in this country before English existed? Side by side with our tongue arose a native style of art. The language is composite, I grant, and so is the architecture, but the one is no less national than the other."

"I think you must allow Stobieski," said Montagu "that Miss Seymour has the best of the argument there."

"Well, I would as soon think of writing in the language of Chaucer as building a Tudor or Elizabethan house now-a-days,"

replied the Pole. "The English of the present day are, I contend, nationally non-identical with those of the fourteenth century. The Romans understood taste and comfort far better than those semi-barbarians. With them and their civilization we can entirely sympathise."

"I do not agree with you. The language of Chaucer has been improved and cultivated, but it is the same as that of Addison and Macaulay. So the Tudor or Elizabethan house has been remodelled to suit the requirements of the nineteenth century. As the tongue has been enriched with foreign idioms so the architecture was, in the time of James the First, beautified with Italian decorations. It still remains an English style of art and, what is more, I think it is the most comfortable. It admits of larger windows than any other, and we northerns require what little light we can get."

Then my villa does not meet with the ap-

preval of Miss Seymour?" exclaimed Montagu mournfully. "I shall regret having built it and be longing to demolish it."

"Oh no! I did not mean to disparage your charming villa," returned Elsie who felt grieved at having been carried away by the argument to say more than she had intended. "In one respect I have misrepresented my own feelings since I profess catholicity in art as in all else. I ought, perhaps, to have urged the claims of the Tudor and Elizabethan styles without disparaging others. I prefer that all should co-exist and would exclude none—and, least of all, the art of ancient Rome and Athens—the most perfect embodiment of beauty which the world has ever known."

"A charming apology!" said Lady Charles de Vere.

"A compliment exquisitely turned," rejoined Montagu, "for Miss Seymour's words need no apology. She speaks as she feels and I am

quite willing to profess myself a disciple to her catholicity in art."

"Well, for that matter," remarked Stobieski, "I am willing to give in and confess myself vanquished by Miss Seymour's arguments. I was always a catholic in art; but I prefer calling myself a cosmopolite, since the other word has been so misnomered and misapplied."

"No reason for not applying it rightly," said Elsie.

"Talking of cosmopolitan tastes in architecture reminds me of your promise, Elliott," remarked Montagu. "You must not forget the drawing of Philœ."

"Ha! Philœ!" exclaimed Stobieski. "Yes—*there* is beauty which is not according to any of our pre-conceived classical or mediæval rules."

This introduction of Egyptian monuments branched off into a side conversation between

Frank Elliott and Stobieski. After breakfast the two, accompanied by Lord Charles and Estcourt, went out to assist at the *battue* of a pheasant cover. This afforded Frank some opportunities for interesting conversation respecting the scenes he was about to visit. Stobieski was well acquainted both with Syria and the Nile. The latter he had followed up beyond Kartoum and Senaar, and had traced the Blue Nile into the mountains of Abyssinia.

Although a sportsman, Montagu felt it incumbent upon him to relinquish his favourite diversion and accompany the remaining guests through the gardens. At first there were few opportunities for separate conversation, but, after awhile, he and Elsie were far ahead of the rest.

"I never fancied that England could be tortured into anything so lovely as this!" said Elsie.

"Do you like the country?"

"I do. I like it too much. I long after an

ideal which I cannot follow, for I approve the better, but pursue the worse. This scene enchants me and wins me from the course which I feel myself called to."

"What do you mean? pardon me, Miss Seymour, but you speak enigmas."

"I think that in London one can do so much more good than in the country."

"That is possible, but many people maintain the opposite. Even now, however, I do not understand your enigma. Do you mean that the country diverts your thoughts from your occupations, or studies, or schemes for doing good?"

"I think that to live in such a scene of beauty as this would divert the thoughts from better things, perhaps."

"How so? do you not consider that there is an alliance between the good and the beautiful. Is there not a humanizing and elevating tendency in the highest works of nature and art?"

"Philosophers tell us so, and I believe it. But, tell me, whether living in this Athenian atmosphere does not rather lessen ones sympathies with the every day life of England? It surely must create a disgust for the vulgarity of ordinary English society?"

"But why mix in it? I do not think it necessary to associate with stupid country neighbours who have not two ideas beyond the hounds and the local gossip. I see no necessity to visit all the squires and clergy of the neighbourhood."

"Yes, I quite feel with you in what you say. In our own neighbourhood, indeed, everywhere in the country, it must be the case. There can be nothing more awfully stupid than the conversation is! But this is not mere want of intellect, I am certain; else, why is it that one feels enjoyment in the discourse of the Italian or Spanish peasantry, who are far more ignorant, whereas our peasants, as well as those above them in station, are so insipid?"

"There is no concealing the fact," replied Montagu, "that the southern people are naturally more intellectual and refined than our good countrymen."

"Have you any school for your poor?"

"I have no poor upon my property, or not more than one or two cottagers. I consider myself a great benefactor to the parish in that respect, since I have freed it of a great number of paupers and have thus reduced the rates to something very slight. The farmers are all grateful to me, so that here the beautiful and useful go hand in hand."

"Where do your labourers live?"

"Oh! I don't know. Principally in a neighbouring parish, I believe."

"Is there any rich landlord there?"

"No, I fancy not, as the parish is chiefly composed of farmers and poor."

"They pay the rates to support your labourers when they are in distress?"

"On the other hand their village is bene-

fitted by my wages. The sums paid upon my property are carried away to be spent in their village."

"And who supports the school in that village?"

"I don't know that there is a school. There ought to be, but, having no property in the parish, to say the truth I have not enquired. I am strongly in favour of education and am pleased to see that government proposes taking it up more energetically and perhaps imposing a rate."

Elsie's thoughts recurred to Branston Park and she could not help contrasting the two walks and her two companions. She had resolved to tell Cecil Montagu of her infant sisterhood and had been preparing to do so in this very conversation, when she perceived that it was utterly impossible that he could sympathize with her. She felt chilled by his remarks upon the poor and turned to other subjects. Montagu, on the other hand, observed her disappointment, for he was quick at

reading the expression of the face, and was piqued to discover a point at which his arts of pleasing seemed to fail. He allowed her for a time to digress into themes of art and beauty, and insensibly won back her admiration by his cultivated and agreeable tone. After a time he imperceptibly returned to the former topic, determined that he would not be vanquished even there.

"Are you interested in the education of the poor?" he enquired.

"It appears to me the most interesting of all questions! our whole social and moral improvement seems to depend upon it," she replied.

"I agree with you, and yet I dislike," said Montagu, "anything like sectarianism in education. In these country parishes the schools fall so entirely into the hands of the clergy."

"I suppose nobody else takes the trouble to interfere," rejoined Elsie with slight sarcasm,

"the landlords do not even appear to know whether there are schools for their labourers or not."

"Will you believe me, I am not really indifferent to the question, but I have such an innate horror of party spirit that I have been scared from that which would naturally have allured me. I feel that I have been mistaken, and that reason would, perhaps, go to prove that a prejudiced education is better than none. I confess that this has been my stumbling-block. Had I some person, who sympathized in my feelings, to join me, I should be inclined to establish a school upon really good principles, free from all taint of sectarian prejudice. Religion is far from being the only thing which children should learn. It seems to me that one of the most important items, is the capability of earning a livelihood and, next to that, I would instil a cultivated taste. A taste for what is refined and intellectual would be the safest preservative against what is gross and

debased. 'The young man imbued with a love for science, even in its simpler forms, and for the beautiful in literature and art, would be more proof against drunkenness than many a scamp who has known his catechism at his fingers' ends.'

"Perhaps so—in one sense—yes, I agree that there is a great deal of truth in what you say," returned Elsie, deeply interested in Montagu's remarks, "you cannot be more entirely opposed to sectarianism than I am. I would take care that what religion I taught should be broad and catholic. A religion suited to all, not the sect of a few, but I would not, I think, exclude it, or make it a secondary influence. It should pervade the whole teaching and yet be very simple and broad and not inconsistent with the beautiful in art and nature. The love of God and the future existence of the soul are surely most elevating and comforting truths, when denuded of the trammels of dogmatic theology. Faith too is a sublime influence,

when accompanied by hope and charity. Faith, even in a wrong object, leads men to great things, and what must it be when applied to eternal goodness, beauty, and love? It must induce its aspirants to holy and elevated purposes. You do not disagree with me in this broad view of faith?"

"No, I have always conceived that certain natures absolutely require that food for the imagination which religion alone affords," replied Montagu, much puzzled at the excessive sentiment which appeared to him to be contained in Elsie's views; "and the simpler their faith is, the better. There are some men of strong minds and without a wild imagination who do not need the same intense speculations, whereas others, equally good, but more imaginative, must be satisfied by metaphysical abstractions. Most minds are not content with what they see, or with what science teaches them, and must, therefore, have faith in the unseen to supply the vacuum. I think with

you, that the broader and more comprehensive that faith is, the better."

"We should entirely agree upon these points," pursued Elsie, who easily jumped at sympathy: "you ought to establish a school."

"Will you assist me with your advice? I will promise to undertake it with your assistance."

"Yes—" replied Elsie, without reflection.

"It shall be entirely upon your plan."

"I am engaged in a philanthropic scheme at present," she said hesitatingly, conceiving that this was a good opportunity for making known her design of the nursing-sisterhood: "I am interested in the establishment of an institution for nurses, or sisters of charity, who are to attend upon the sick poor."

"Sisters of charity!" exclaimed Montagu, "that is one of my dreams. I consider it a national disgrace that we have been without an institution which has flourished so long in other countries. Will you kindly do me a

favour, Miss Seymour? will you allow me to be a contributor towards your scheme? I feel so certain of its principles, in your hands, that I do not hesitate to offer what little I can bestow."

"I think you would approve, if you saw it," returned Elsie, who felt in ecstasies at Montagu's frank and cordial reception of her disclosure. "The religious question is preserved as broad and catholic as you could require. We admit all sects and allow of all views."

"I was always of Pope's opinion," rejoined Montagu,

" 'In faith and hope the world may disagree,
But all mankind's concern is charity,' "

"and, thus, you will carry out charity to the utmost, without allowing faith and hope to clash with it."

"Now you will understand my enigma when I answered your question concerning my love

of the country. I feel enticed from my scheme, which lies in dark foggy London, by this beautiful place and its lovely scenery."

They had reached the terrace, where the sun was shining upon the white statues and the frescoed portico of the lovely villa. The rest of the party were approaching the spot where Elsie and her companion stood.

"You flatter me. You do more than justice to Thornwood."

"No, indeed I do not. It is perfection."

"Could you not reconcile both your partialities?"

Elsie coloured crimson and turned her head, but Montagu, feeling perhaps, that he had said too much, changed the subject by calling her attention and that of Lady Charles de Vere, who was coming towards them, to an opening which he contemplated among the tall evergreens overhanging the left slope of the ravine.

Soon afterwards, Elsie followed her mother

into the house and, in the retirement of her chamber, meditated upon her late conversation.

She had met with more than sympathy at his hands. Had he not almost hinted a proposal to her? Yes! and she thought that she *might* reconcile her two partialities and, as Cecil Montagu's wife, pursue her schemes of philanthropy. He had said enough to lead her to fancy that he might propose ere long, and after turning it in her mind she came to a conclusion not unfavourable to the handsome Montagu.

CHAPTER III.

KATHERINE.

THAT same day, among the additional guests at dinner, were Lady Elliott and her daughter.

A fresh arrangement had been made since Frank and Montagu had left Brighton, and aunt Margaret had volunteered to take charge of her eldest niece, while Lady Elliott accompanied Kate to Thornwood. This change of plans may have been caused either by Mary's suffering from a slight indisposition, or through a fear to intrude too large a party into Mr.

Montagu's house. The former was the cause assigned.

The classical dining-room glittered with lights and the music-hall re-echoed Elsie's clear and powerful tones, as they changed from grave to gay, varying with exquisite modulation. It would have been hard for the keenest observer to detect in her voice or deep blue eye, one shade or symptom of care ; but, nevertheless, beneath the sunlight of that countenance, there lurked a gloom which she strove, not vainly, to conceal.

The afternoon had been spent in a ride with her father and Montagu. She had never been happier, and yet now her secret spirit was depressed and sad.

She had finished another song and looked up. Montagu stood at her side and begged one more, pointing out a Neapolitan air which she sang to perfection. Twice before had she lifted up her eyes and seen Montagu conver-

sing with Miss Elliott upon the divan in the peristyle, but each time he had returned, before the termination of the music, to greet her with the flattering accents of his praise. Now she sang again, and again raised her eyes, hoping that this time he might not have left her side. The eyes fell, but the voice did not lose its clear melodious intonation. She had seen him once more with Katharine, admiring and conversing, while she, poor Elsie, sat and sang and none of that applauding company could suspect that her heart was chilled.

"Your praise of my villa delights me," said Montagu in reply to a remark of Kate's, "I long to show you the grounds around it. May I hope that to-morrow you will venture to mount a horse, which I can offer you as perfectly safe?"

Kate blushed at the recollection of her misadventure.

"I have not brought my habit."

"Is it possible? I had looked forward to your riding again. I could show you some lovely scenes."

"And the poor Arab? How is it?"

"Oh! he has been well for sometime. I have turned him into a loose box for the winter, but he is perfectly recovered. I hope that his stumbling-fit has not been the secret cause of your leaving your habit behind you? I should be grieved if I thought so."

"It was so clumsy to throw it down! I cannot forgive myself," said Katharine earnestly.

Montagu did not reply at once. Her gaze was fixed so pensively and apologetically upon his face that he was tempted to allow it to continue without interruption.

"Miss Elliott! you will not doubt my sincerity," he said at length, "when I tell you that if it had been carelessness, nay even wilfulness, on your part, my feelings would have

been the same. You are wrong to accuse yourself. The horse was alone to blame."

There was an emphasis upon the word feelings which led Katharine to colour slightly.

"I hope you will not refuse to send for your habit?" he continued, but observing her hesitation, went on to describe some private theatricals, which he was proposing to get up during her visit, with the assistance of his present guests.

Elsie had concluded her song and forsaken the piano. She conversed first with Lady Charles de Vere and afterwards with Count Stobieski. From time to time her eyes wandered stealthily towards the ottoman in the hall upon which Katharine and Montagu sat.

For an instant Cecil had been absorbed. There was much in Katharine's simplicity to fascinate the worldly man. The absence was but momentary, for when he looked up he was quick to discern Elsie's restless glances, and immediately was at her side.

"I want to persuade you to come and consult with Miss Elliott about the theatricals of which I spoke to you to-day. I have been endeavoring to induce her to take part in them, but shall need your assistance, I find, in this, as in all else. Stobieski you must also lend us a helping hand."

Elsie had felt out of humour, but there was a charm in his voice which instantly soothed her. The fascinator knew by intuition the jealousy that lurked in her bosom and laboured successfully all that evening to allay every symptom of the envenomed passion. He did this, however, without alarming Katharine, whose admiration was of a calmer kind and rather resembled the worship of a Parsee for his Sun-God.

Katharine's heart beat high when, in the solitude of her room, she recalled the sweet toned voice of Montagu, but she chased the dangerous recollections as she knelt in prayer and as she closed her eyes in sleep.

Elsie had no outward cause for jealousy, for

it was with her, not with Kate, that Montagu took his morning ride, and it was she, not Kate, who directed the preparations for the theatricals. She was queen of the festivities—the wit and talent which all praised, the light which all worshipped, for in such matters there was no one fit to cope with Elsie Seymour.

After luncheon, on the following day, there was an expedition to the remains of the Roman villa of which Count Stobieski had spoken. Elsie and Lady Charles de Vere rode with two or three of the gentlemen. Kate was in the carriage with the remainder of the party.

The villa was upon the slope of a hill covered with brushwood. Nothing could be prettier than the spot, commanding a view over the most varied part of Surrey and the north of Hampshire.

The carriage party reached the place sometime before the arrival of the equestrians and, to them, Count Stobieski pointed out the

original ground-plan of the villa, describing the uses of the various apartments, of which the basement walls were still perceptible.

The trees around were for the most part denuded of foliage and the ground strewed with the brown and yellow leaves of the beech and horse-chesnuts. A clump of firs crested the summit of the hillock and a thicket of box and thorn covered a portion of its slope. The approach of the equestrians would be concealed from persons standing at the ruins, and even the sound of horses' feet, rendered imperceptible, by the density of the undergrowth of box and gorse. Katharine felt impatient of Stobieski's long disquisition and, considering the interest she had professed to take in Roman villas, looked very vacant and abstracted, and ever and anon, the gallant Count (who greatly admired her) would appeal to her judgment only to receive in return a cold absent look.

"Mamma!" said Kate, turning to Lady

Elliott, "you look tired of standing here and I fear you may take cold. You had better let me walk with you until the—until Lady Charles de Vere and Miss Seymour arrive."

Kate would not have acknowledged, even to herself, the secret cause of her impatience.

"My dear Kate," exclaimed Lady Elliott "You are taking me a very dirty walk. Should we not find it pleasanter up the hill towards the clump of fir trees?"

"As you like, mamma. I fancied the hill might be too steep for you."

But, as Lady Elliott persisted Katharine, was forced to give up the road which she longed to pursue, for the hill-side which led them yet farther away from the expected riding party.

The ascent was steep and to Katharine it appeared very tedious.

"You look tired, Kate," said her mother.

"No, mamma; I am not tired, I assure you."

"I see you are turning back for the view, but let us go on to the top of the hill and we shall see it better."

Poor Katharine resigned herself to her fate, simply remarking: "Shall we not be missed by our party?"

"I think I see some of them following us," replied Lady Elliott.

The day was soft and clear and the view charming. The atmosphere was almost enough to soothe Katharine's feelings and calm her impatience. She gazed with delight upon the distant prospect and the undulating line of hills forming the horizon. Upon turning, she discovered that the view to the north-west was shut out by the trees, and she longed to go round the clump in order to explore in that direction.

"Mamma, how I should like to see the view upon the other side."

"Well, go dear, while I meet Mrs. Wilton and Count Stobieski, who are coming up."

Kate lost no time in availing herself of her mother's permission. There was a flat green-sward around the clump of trees, upon the summit of the knoll, and she followed the broad path of turf towards the farther side. She found that, as she advanced, the turf sloped downwards, for the plantation was continued down the bank, so that there was apparently no point whence she could obtain an uninterrupted view in that direction. She persisted, however, in following the grass walk, which, after a time, led through a portion of the thicket. The path was strewn with leaves and the gleams of sunshine gave a beauty to this woodland scene. Curiosity may have prompted her to discover whether the walk would re-ascend the hill and conduct her to where she had left her mother, and, at all events, the adventure was pleasant upon such a day.

Presently, the leafless trees were succeeded by dark evergreens, and she came to a spot where the road branched off in different direc-

tions. She was at a loss whether to select one of *these* paths, or to return as she had come.

While thus reflecting, the sounds of a song, sung by a female voice, attracted her attention. They proceeded from among the trees considerably to the left of where she stood, and lower down the hill. There was a sweetness, and yet a distinctness in the tones, which reminded her of the music of the south. She was tempted to follow the lower path for a short distance, in order, if possible, to discover the words of the song, or to see the syren who uttered them. She approached the singer, who continued invisible while she listened to the wild melody.

SONG.

I tell thee of a maiden fair,
Who espoused a cavalier ;
She was blithe and debonair,
He was gay with martial air,
As noble as a peer.
She was very gentle,

ELSIE SKYMOUR.

Was this maiden mild,
And as pure and simple,
As a new-born child.
Sinless, we can never be,
 Since Eve sinned and fell,
But, sinless, as simplicity,
 Was she of whom I tell !

It is a sin,
Weak hearts to win,
With subtlety and guile :
No fouler deed,
Than cause to bleed,
By sin's deceitful smile !

With haughty air and noble mien,
I never saw so brave a knight ;
With look so noble, step so light,
Eyes so winning and so bright,
As this same knight, I ween !

He stole that maiden's heart away,
She could not but admire !
He vowed he loved her. She could say,
But one poor word and that was "yea ;"
His eyes had kindled fire !
Alack ! Alack ! What shall I say ?
Alack ! Alack ! And well-a-day !

The strange pathos of the voice attracted Katharine and the words interested her, for they seemed to record her own feelings. For a moment she fancied they described Montagu, the handsome seductive Montagu, and that, perhaps, the singer might be some object of his delusions, now feeling the bitterness of her fall. The impression was momentary. In a single instant she had banished the calumny from her heart. It was impossible that her noble and generous host could ever have wronged any one. She battled with herself against her fancy, and in such contests, the will is certain to prevail.

A few paces brought Katharine within view of the singer, but without being seen by her. A tall figure strangely dressed, and with dark tresses hanging over her shoulders, met the eyes of Katharine. There was a discordant wildness about the attire of this personage which led her to the conclusion that she must be a mad woman, and she doubted whether it

might not be more prudent to retrace her steps.

The woodland path had brought her to an open space, carpetted with moss and enclosed with thick brushwood. Although many of the trees had lost their leaves, the hollies with their dark foliage and clusters of scarlet berries, compensated for the absence of summer verdure. Immediately below this apparently retired spot was a sequestered lane, leading from the main turnpike road towards the summit of the hill. In this nook the tall figure stood, with her eyes uplifted to Heaven and her black tresses falling upon her shoulders. Katharine could not avoid looking for a moment upon the strange picture ere she turned away in order, if possible, to make her retreat unobserved.

She had scarcely moved when she was arrested by these words :

“Ho ! there ! stop maiden, I beseech thee ! hearken to me !”

Katharine turned and saw the woman's eyes

fixed upon her. There was something in the unearthly gaze which seemed to rivet her.

"What dost thou here all alone maiden? Hast thou no protector? 'Tis not safe, for such as thee, in these woods."

Having said this she turned and placing herself in a listening posture, said: "Hist! hist! dost hear? The gallant seeks thee, maiden! Flee away with me and I will protect thee."

Kate was bewildered by the strange and earnest manner of the speaker.

"Thou art not safe! He comes. Dost hear his footsteps?"

So saying the tall woman approached close to Katharine and, placing her long fingers upon her arm, signalled with her other hand to listen.

"Hist! hist! I hear him. Thou hast no time to linger. Come! flee away with me or thou art lost, lost, lost!"

Katharine was the more terrified and per-

plexed by the action of this mad woman, as she actually did hear the sound of footsteps and, almost ere she could free her arm from her grasp, saw the form of Cecil Montagu.

She turned from the mysterious being and met Montagu, who remained for a moment rooted to the spot, with his eyes fixed in wonder upon the female, who was receding from their sight among the trees.

Katharine would willingly have passed him unnoticed, but, in an instant, he had recovered himself and accosted her with his usual frank and polished manner :

“ Miss Elliott ! Your mother did not know what had become of you. She sent me in search of you. Have you been annoyed by that mad woman ? She is a strange creature who wanders about the country and is quite insane, although, I believe, perfectly harmless. You look pale. I am afraid she has frightened you ? ”

"No—what drove her mad?" enquired Kate, who had a sufficient amount of intuitive tact and presence of mind to reassume an appearance of calmness and unconcern.

"There are strange stories about her in the neighbourhood, most of which I believe to be inventions. It is said that her madness was caused by blighted love, and a halo of romance is thus shed around her. She looks like a heroine of romance!"

"Yes—she must have been beautiful," replied Kate. "Where does she live? I long to see her again."

"She has fascinated you! I almost think she must be an enchantress with power of secret spells and incantations. I wish I knew her secret."

Kate laughed. She had already forgotten her first impression—that which the ravings of the mad woman seemed intended to convey, and which for a moment she had felt—that Montague himself was her betrayer. She laughed

so merrily at his light words that he was encouraged to proceed.

"Will you teach me that secret, for I feel sure you can?"

"The secret of fascination! I am sure you know it better than any one in the world—than any one I have ever met," she said, and after a moment's thought, truthfully, though well-nigh inaudibly, added, "almost in my life."

Montagu caught the whispered sound, and felt provoked, perhaps, although he did not show it. The provocation made him resolved to win. From that moment his die seemed cast. Katharine had supplanted Elsie in his dream.

"Almost in your life," repeated Montagu in a low soft voice, while he fixed his expressive eyes upon her's. "Then tell me who was the arch-fascinator—the Archimage among enchanters?"

Thus conversing they approached the sum-

mit of the wooded bank where the yew trees grew so thickly and the shade overhead was so dense, that Kate's blushing cheek was partly concealed from her admirer.

"What a question! I don't know," returned the girl with some confusion.

"If you give me the second place, may I not know who occupies the first?" enquired Montagu, and immediately continued, "but I have no right to ask you such questions, unless it be the right of friendship. You allow me that right, do you not, Miss Elliott?"

"Yes; oh! yes," replied Kate, who remembered his generosity about the horse and, who, if the truth were known, was not insensible to the pleasure of being admired by such a man.

"Between certain persons in this world there is a link of sympathy," pursued Montagu, before Kate had time to finish her sentence, "which no third person can see or understand. And yet, it is a mistake to suppose that cha-

racter alone is the secret of those sympathies. The character and tastes may strangely differ and yet the sympathy exist. I am not, myself, much of a mystic and not the least given to German sentimentalisms. I prefer believing in the old doctrine of 'Love subduing all things,' to any more refined notion, as of two hearts created and predestined for each other, and such like. And yet, very often, a single glance has made an impression which can never be effaced."

Katharine thought of Herbert Lisle.

"And yet how deceptive such first impressions must often prove," he continued.

"Do you think so? I am inclined to believe in first impressions being almost always correct."

"What, may I ask you, was your first impression of Miss Seymour?"

"I admired her?"

"And you do still?"

"Yes."

"Do you really think her pretty?"

"Certainly—yes. Although her style of beauty is, perhaps, peculiar."

"I think she is too *manière* and too learned," said Montagu.

Katherine, although not naturally envious, had a sufficient amount of feminine jealousy (and that amount was very, very small, but there is nearly always a little) to feel a momentary satisfaction in his words.

"She is clever, or learned if you will," rejoined Kate "but do not call her *manière*. She passes off her knowledge so naturally and easily, I think."

"I am afraid we shall not quite agree about her. She has not always art enough to appear natural, and that gives a degree of constraint and a want of that repose which high art reflects from nature."

Katharine felt the truth of what he said and, in her heart, was not displeased to feel it although she could never own it to herself,

and still less to others. Perhaps she was alive to the preference of Cecil Montagu.

"Surely she is not wanting in repose. I have seen her sit as calm and placid as a statue, as the Minerva in the Braccia Nuovo of the Vatican."

"Nay—you speak of one of the most exquisite statues in the world, supposed to be copied from the Pallas Partheons of Pheidias. *There* is repose if you please; but now, take the works of Canova and you will find, in almost all of them, an utter want of it. Repose does not mean rest from action. The Apollo has it in perfection. There is a calm of action as well as of rest. It is the essential quality of beauty and, as it were, the impress of divinity."

"It is peace," ventured Katharine, who thought of the peace of the gospel, which is the acme of repose, the peace which passeth all understanding.

"Peace! That perfectly expresses the idea in one sense. You know the Vatican and

have seen Canova's Theseus set up as a kind of rival to the Apollo. As the Theseus is to the Apollo so is your living Minerva to the Pallas of Pheidias. The one is an imitation of art and the other its consummation. Repose is the essence of the beautiful. In the agonies of the Laacöon, as in the calm serenity of the Transfiguration, there is always that one essential quality.

Katharine believed that what he said was true and yet she also felt, although she scarcely told herself as much, that his words did not embody the whole truth.

"Is there not still more than mere repose expressed in the Christian peace which seems to pervade the pictures of Rafaëlle?"

"It may be so, and yet I should scarcely think that there was any quality of human nature of which Grecian art was ignorant."

Katharine recalled a conversation upon art with Herbert Lisle, by the church at Carrowsby. The thought crossed her mind that he

would have reasoned differently of Christian and heathen art.

"But I was not speaking of a human so much as of a divine quality," returned Kate, "Christianity elevates human nature and appears to draw it up to God, while paganism, I should fancy, lowered its divinities to the level of men."

"How admirably expressed!" exclaimed Montagu, who could not but be struck by the thought contained in her reply, even although he might not appreciate its sentiment.

Thus conversing, they had approached the spot where Katharine had left her mother but, as both she and the rest of the party had strolled in an opposite direction, they did not at once rejoin them.

"I suppose you have been lionized over these Roman remains by the count?" pursued Montagu. "It is pleasant to picture to oneself that near this spot, commanding this same delightful view, there lived, some seventeen

hundred years ago, a Roman of high birth and education; born, perhaps, in the seven-hilled city, beneath the shadow of the capitol, one who had spent some happy hours of leisure by the blue waters of Baïæ, or in those fair campanian sea-towns in the bay of Neapolis. Think you not he must have sighed, sometimes, to return from this land of his exile to revisit the blue-waved Parthenope, or the Alban hills of his home? What a banishment it must have been in those days! What a contrast between the civilization, the art, the learning, the society, the climate, of Imperial Rome, and the desolate barbarism of Britain! It would have driven me to despair, I think."

"He could not have come for pleasure," replied Katharine.

"No! I suppose he occupied some civil or military post and came here much for the same reasons as our civilians and cadets go out to India; but, to my mind, without the same advantages of climate and luxury."

"There is something bracing and invigorating in the climes of the north," said Kate.

"But tell me? Do you not sometimes long for an Italian sunshine?"

"Not often."

"You are of a contented disposition?"

"I strive for that."

"It is in vain for Englishmen, with either position in society, or ambition, to dream of passing their lives basking in an Italian sunshine. I confess I sometimes sigh at its recollections and have endeavoured to stereotyped some of them in my villa at Thornwood. Tell me whether my attempt meets with your approbation? But tell me candidly, as a critic rather than an acquaintance, or, better than either, if you would deign to do so, as a—friend?"

"It surpasses all I had heard of it. It is lovely indeed. I could not have imagined anything so un-English in England."

"You do it too much honour!" exclaimed

Montagu who, as he gazed upon her beautiful face, thought how happy he should be if she would condescend to become its tenant: "I must take you to see the glen and initiate you into all its haunts."

He would have said more, but they were now in sight of the rest of their party. Elsie came up to them and questioned Katharine touching her absence. All enquiries were cleverly parried by Montagu and the subject of the mysterious woman avoided by both.

When she found herself alone at Thornwood, Katharine recalled the events of the morning and endeavoured to analyse her feelings. Montagu's manner and his marked attentions had pleased and flattered her, but there was, withal, a something wanting to satisfy her heart and enlist her sympathies. She admired and could not tell why the admiration did not more completely absorb her whole being. The thought crossed her, but she speedily repressed

it. For an instant she again suffered herself to wonder whether it was to him that the song of the strange woman referred. There had been something so very convincing in her manner when she bade her listen to his approaching footsteps, and yet her evident madness was enough to account for what was, otherwise, rendered improbable by the unruffled calmness of the accused: "No," thought she, "it cannot have been he of whom she spoke. He is so noble and good!" And she was still musing of him when her mother came to see whether she was ready to go down.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RIVALS.

Each day there was some fresh excursion and the evenings' amusements gave a zest to the *dolce far niente* of the mornings. It is not, alas! always sunshine. *Post nubila Phœbus* is essentially applicable to our climate, although, to say the truth, Apollo is sometimes so long in piercing the clouds that his votaries are apt to grow fretful, to pine, and even despair of ever seeing him again.

There were, sad to relate, some rainy days

at Thornwood, when excursions and rides were given up and shooting parties abandoned. During this interval the theatricals furnished an admirable resource. There had, at first, been some difficulty in the selection of a drama to suit the personages. The amateur actors and actresses required parts fitted to show off their various latent talents. It is true that very few of them could act at all, and that Elsie and Cecil Montagu were alone worthy of being consulted upon the question, but there were several reasons for not neglecting the others. Montagu was anxious that Katharine should not have an inferior part, and yet he was aware that, if brought into contrast with Elsie, the latter would infallibly eclipse her. Among the various plays suggested were "The Tempest," "The Merchant of Venice," "The Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet." Alas! who was to be the Juliet to Montagu's Romeo? "Sheridan's Rivals," "School for Scandal" &c., and Goldsmith's

"She stoops to conquer." Some even went so low as to propose "Tom Thumb" and "Blue Beard," while others soared to the heights of "Comus" and "Sampson Agonistes."

None of the party were agreed when, at length, Elsie proposed that Montagu should compose a play for the occasion. At first he refused, but afterwards showed her a melodrama, written by himself some years before, which she declared was the very thing they wanted. It was founded upon a Florentine story of the fourteenth century, when the plague was desolating the fair Tuscan city and when, in the seclusion of their beautiful villas, ladies and cavaliers listened to tales in Boccaccio style. Out of these materials Montagu had wrought a poetical love story, in which a Venetian envoy of noble birth was made to fall in love with a beautiful Florentine, whose hand he had demanded of her father. After an absence, he had returned to Florence where the plague was raging. For some days he vainly sought the object of his love, who had taken

refuge in a villa beneath Fiesole. Her companions had insisted upon her selecting a knight, as one of the conditions of remaining among them. Adriana, such was her name, had a dear friend and companion, Isaura, who had been affianced to a certain noble cavalier, Giuliano dei Strozzi. Public rumour declared that Isaura had been carried off by the plague and Adriana had no reason to doubt the truth of the report. Adriana's own father was dead and she was alone, as it were, among this noble company of ladies and knights. One day Giuliano dei Strozzi appeared at the villa and was admitted among the company. He believed Isaura to be dead and confirmed the rumour which had been circulated. Upon the arrival of this fresh cavalier, the other ladies insisted upon Adriana's accepting him as her knight and he was no less compelled by the rule of the society. Life was short—the plague rendered its continuance uncertain from day to day—and wherefore not spend it agreeably?

Such was the philosophy of the gentle society. When Adriana pleaded for delay upon the ground of her former betrothal to the Venetian, Lorenzo Vanini, Giuliano declared that he had been seen in Florence but had disappeared and was supposed to have fallen a victim to the disease. The truth was, that while searching Florence in pursuit of his mistress, Lorenzo had wandered from palace to palace, now deserted by their proprietors and many of them converted into scenes of vice and drunkenness. Into one of these a horde of ruffians—men of the lowest and most depraved class—had just broken, and were serving themselves to the various articles of luxury contained in its splendid chambers, in which they purposed to celebrate their drunken orgies. Of the noble family of its late occupants, there remained an only child, a beautiful maiden of eighteen, Isaura dei Buonacorsi, who remained unprotected in the desolate mansion. When Lorenzo reached the house he heard the screams of this

maiden, who was in danger of falling into the hands of the frantic crew. He gallantly rushed with drawn sword to her rescue. She had taken refuge in an inner apartment, of which they were besieging the door. Ere they had time to force it, Lorenzo cried, "to the rescue," and pointed back as if he were followed by others. For an instant the ruffian mob was cowed by his noble aspect and intrepid daring. He begged to speak to the chieftain of the band and addressed him in such a tone of mingled courtesy and firmness, that the man felt recalled to his social position in the presence of a superior, as if the distinctions of the old society were still in force. He gave Lorenzo permission to liberate the lady and escort her in safety from the palace. At length he obtained an entrance into the room whither Isaura had escaped and, finding that they had known each other formerly at Adriana's house, she was induced to fly with him to the outskirts of Florence. By a singular hazard,

excusable in fiction, they took refuge at the very villa near Fiesole where Adriana and Giuliano were living. They were readily admitted into the noble company, where the hopes of the quartett seemed blighted for ever. Adriana was fearfully jealous when she found that her friend had usurped her place with Lorenzo. Isaura was no less bitter against Adriana. Giuliano sighed for Isaura, and Lorenzo was sick at heart when he found his lost Adriana made over to another. Such was the wretchedness of these unfortunate lovers that they allowed no room for explanations. Each was willing to believe the worst of the other and, although nothing but the most platonic attachment had as yet existed on either side, the true lovers treated each other with such coldness that they wantonly veiled from themselves that very truth upon which their happiness depended. Their mutual misunderstandings afforded great scope for the dramatist, who had worked them out, in true

Goldoni style, until, by some accidental allusion, the truth became first suspected and presently revealed; after which, Adriana returned to her Venetian admirer and Isaura consorted with Giuliano.

In such a drama it was easy to find parts for all the amateur performers. Montagu himself was universally selected for that of Lorenzo, while no one but Elsie was fit to represent Adriana, who was made a more prominent character in the piece than Isaura, who, although one of the heroines, had but little talking to do. The part of Giuliano was to have been apportioned to Frank, had he not been obliged to go to London to prepare for his tour.

Montagu had expected a visit from the Mordens, but they had been detained in town by Frederick's outfit, and hoped to come later.

Lady Elliott had intended accompanying her son to London, but as all Montagu's art, combined with Kate's good will, had been employed to detain her, she was forced to

relinquish the plan. Frank himself joined in persuading her, for his sister's sake, to remain at Thornwood.

The morning rehearsals were a great resource; and, during Frank's absence, Montagu undertook, the double part of Lorenzo and Giuliano. This was a difficult task for him, but he did it well, and without exciting rivalry between the heroines. Kate was not jealous by nature and Elsie's disposition was in some degree counteracted by her philosophy. Yet Elsie loved Cecil Montagu to a degree far exceeding any passion which had yet arisen in the more timid heart of Katharine.

The self-denying schemes, which, a few weeks before, had occupied the thoughts of the beautiful girl, seemed now laid aside. When alone in her chamber, endeavouring to fix her mind upon the work of her London sisterhood, or upon the letters accumulating day by day, she felt unhinged for the difficult task which she had imposed upon herself. For a time she

would sit buried in a dreamy abstraction and awake from her musings with the image of Cecil in her mind's eye. There was an intensity in her character which could neither feel nor act by halves. Neither did she conceal from herself how deeply she loved ; for, whatever may have been her faults, she was true to herself and never afraid of confronting her own conscience. She knew her passion and had determined to hide it from every mortal being. Such concealment was a tremendous effort to her, for the strength of her character partook rather of the nature of an external covering than internal sinew. Beneath the strong shell there were points of weakness and she often longed for some one friend, to whom she could open her heart and, from whom she might seek advice and consolation. Oh ! That there were a friar Lawrence to whom she could declare her Juliet-like love ! Had she believed more perfectly in the effect of prayer, she would have found comfort and strength in her

appeals, but she was accustomed to look upon it as a subjective influence instead of an objective instrument. Her prayers were offered to soothe her own feelings rather than to draw down the Divine benediction. She fenced-in God's revelation by the limited barriers of man's reason.

But Elsie adored the man in whom she saw realized many of her day-dream fancies, and imagined that she saw still more. She seemed to trace a chord of sympathy between them, for he would often converse with her in private about her sisterhood and appear to enter into all her projects and opinions and yet, since the day when he had used that enigmatical form of speech, which, perhaps from his mode of saying it rather than the words, she had construed into a half declaration, he had never uttered a single word which could be so misunderstood. The eyes of love are watchful, and no endeavours of Montagu's could prevent her perceiving that, while he paid her a more

marked attention in public, he loved Katharine the best at heart. Although she concealed it well she felt fearfully jealous of her rival, and Montagu found it almost impossible to escape her observation. The mornings were taken up with the rehearsals, during which she never left him alone with Miss Elliott for a moment, and, in the afternoons, when the weather permitted, she was always prepared for a ride. Elsie executed all this vigilance without any apparent effort, but it was really to the neglect of those self-imposed duties which were requiring her daily attention. She sighed and felt inclined to condemn fate and providence when she saw the arrears in the weekly accounts of her sisterhood and the unanswered letters of application lying on her table. Poor Kate Elliott was the innocent cause of it all. "I wish she would go away!" thought Elsie, more than once.

She always rose early and might have writ-

ten then, but for her restless and anxious state of mind. She left her room because she heard voices below and fancied that Montagu and Kate might be alone together.

One morning she came down and found her father sitting by himself reading *The Times* of the previous day.

"Elsie, dearest, you do not look well. I am sure something fidgets you. What is it, child?"

"Not well, papa?" replied the girl, nettled by her looks being called in question at a time when so much seemed to depend upon them. "I was never better in my life."

And truly, when she coloured up at her father's untimely speech, she looked, for the moment, as fresh and beautiful as ever. This may have satisfied Mr. Seymour, who resumed his leading article while Elsie took up a book upon the table, until breakfast was announced.

The letters were delivered before Kate came down stairs. There were several for Elsie which she opened and read. The first was thus :

*“ House of Mercy. Bloomsbury.
15th November, 18—.*

“DEAR MISS SEYMOUR,

“ Will you kindly pardon my trespassing upon your time, but I really do not know what to do. Our house is in a terrible state of confusion, and a bailiff is in it. I took the liberty of writing to you for some money, nearly a fortnight ago, but I fear there must have been some mistake. Our tradesmen have not been paid their weekly accounts and will no longer give us any credit. I cannot help fearing that the bills, which I have sent regularly, according to desire, must have miscar-

ried, having received no acknowledgement of them for many weeks past. All our sisters have been much dissatisfied and have given notice that they shall leave. There have been applications which would have supplied their places, but these have not been answered. I have always posted them regularly as you directed me. We have done no nursing work or visiting lately, as the whole house has been at sixes and sevens. I could not go through with it myself, but that I trust God will not desert the good work. Sister Eliza is going to leave us the day after to-morrow, and then I shall be left alone in the superintendence. All these desertions serve to increase the suspicions of our tradespeople, who begin to think that we do not intend paying them, and I really fear that we may be left without anything to eat. I am sure that our letters cannot have reached you. I tell Miss Barnes this, but she will not listen and is determined to leave. I hope this

letter may be forwarded to where you are staying, and that you will pardon my freedom in writing so urgently.

“ I am, dear Miss Seymour,

“ Your very faithful and obliged servant,

“ Sister MARY THOMPSON.”

The letter was addressed to “Miss Seymour, Thornwood,” with directions “to be forwarded if not there.” It may be as well to explain, in this place, that Miss Thompson and Miss Barnes (alias sisters Mary and Eliza) were the two superintendents, who acted alternately as presiding sisters ; the first a churchwoman, and the second a unitarian.

Poor Elsie read and re-read the letter and then calmly placed it aside. For a moment

the thought crossed her of seeking advice from Cecil Montagu, but she was too proud. She could not reveal her failure to the man whose admiration she sought. It was a terrible blow to her, but she looked as gay and cheerful as ever. She felt her genius. She had a will and knew that she could conquer. The failure had arisen from her own neglect and by the waving of her magic wand could she not restore order into the tangled web, and re-create the creation of her mind?

During breakfast she absorbed Montagu's attention, but afterwards retired and set to work, in earnest, to restore the ruined fabric. For this one morning the rehearsal was neglected, and Elsie was busy at her solitary task.

Had Cecil seen that lovely one seated at her work, her face bending over the piles of correspondence and figures, while her small white hand was rapidly executing its labours, could he have resisted the fascinating sight? Her

comprehension soon discovered how to restore order into her incipient institution and to make this very slip a stepping stone to greater success. She determined to counteract the misfortune by a more complete development of her scheme.

She accepted all the offers received from persons desirous of joining the sisterhood and wrote cheques for the tradespeople, which she enclosed to Mary Thompson, desiring her to pay them and henceforth to cease employing them. She also sent her a sum of money for her current expenses and begged her to accept the permanent office of superintending sister. To Miss Barnes she wrote a warm and kindly conceived letter, informing her, that, although, she could no longer hold the office of superintendent, yet, that, if she chose to remain she should always be treated with the same kindness and consideration as heretofore. To each of the nursing, or lay sisters, Elsie sent an

affectionate note urging them to increased devotion and to a more exact fulfilment of their daily duties.

The bills and accounts were all carefully revised by her; not a point was neglected to reinstate the fallen tower. For once, since she had been at Thornwood, she had abstracted her mind from its paradise of delights and its handsome owner, to fulfil the real and earnest life-task to which she had pledged herself.

Her work was nobly conceived and ably executed. A certain knowledge of human character was needed for its fulfilment, and her letter to each sister was so written as to influence her peculiar bent. The art of pleasing was required in weaving this web which was to capture the truant subjects of her enterprise.

There were some points which she felt called upon to abandon. Three of those who sought admission as sisters, were Wesleyans, who would only join upon condition of being al-

lowed united prayer, in which any of the lay sisters might be free to join. This was contrary to Elsie's principles and rules, but, like a skilful general, she knew where to make sacrifices and conceded the point for the sake of obtaining reinforcements to her band.

When she had finished her work, she felt better satisfied with herself than she had done for many days. A load seemed off her mind, and she felt so grateful to Providence as to pour forth some feelings of thankfulness. There was exultation in her step as she left her room, and descended to drop her letters into the post-box.

It was a beautiful sunshiny day and most of the party were out of doors; and, when she entered the library she discovered that Kate and Cecil were not there. It wanted half-an-hour to luncheon and she was tempted to wander into the garden, where she found her mother strolling about with Lady Elliott and Mrs. Wilton.

"Dear child where have you been all the morning? nobody knew what had become of you. I said I thought you were writing letters."

"So I was—where are the rest? Has there been any rehearsal?"

"No indeed," replied Lady Elliott: "Kate went with Lady Charles de Vere and the gentlemen to see the ravine and they are not come back yet."

"Shall I go and look for them?" she said and, crossing the terrace, rapidly descended into the ravine below. The loveliness of the day and the happiness consequent upon the achievement of her self-imposed toil were not enough, at that moment, to dissipate her anxious jealousy. To think that, all this while, Katharine Elliott had been enjoying the society of the charming Montagu!

When she had reached the pathway at the bottom of the glen, she listened for voices and fancied she heard them in the distance. Fol-

lowing the course of the streamlet, she presently met Lady Charles de Vere and Mr. Wilton who told her that the rest of the party were somewhere behind.

"What!" thought she. "Katharine with Cecil Montagu!"

As soon as she was out of sight of Lady Charles de Vere, she almost ran along in her anxiety to reach the remaining wanderers.

She soon heard other voices and, in the turning of the path, came upon Lord Charles and Count Stobieski.

"Where is Miss Elliott?" she enquired, after she had entered into conversation with these two gentlemen.

"Oh! she was walking with Mr. Montagu when I saw her last," replied Stobieski. "Have you not met them? I thought they were in front."

"No!" returned Elsie, and made some excuse for continuing her search.

Then they were alone together! Montagu

and her rival, alone ! She hurried along, and then she stopped to listen, and again pressed forward. She could hear no sound but that of the murmuring streamlet and the rustling of the autumn leaves.

After wandering onwards for a time, she left the main pathway and diverged through the evergreens into a narrow walk, which she followed at random. "Perhaps," thought she, "after all, they may have returned homewards by some other road."

It struck her that Lady Charles might have been mistaken and that they might possibly have gone on before her, as Count Stobieski had suggested.

The path she had chosen was narrow and tortuous. The arbutus and bays grew luxuriantly and almost met above her head. The autumnal fragrance was delicious and the bright sunshine might have rendered this retreat a garden of paradise had not Elsie's own heart converted it into a hell.

Onwards she wandered and already had given up all hope of finding them, when she fancied that she heard voices.

As she advanced farther, the sounds became more distinct and seemed to proceed from among the trees on her left. There was a parallel walk to that which she pursued, concealed by the thick foliage. Elsie must have been opposite to the spot, where, in all probability, the speakers were seated. She stood still and listened.


“No, she cannot think that. I admire her talents, but I never could love her. No—listen to me—Miss Elliott! Katharine, if I may venture so to call you—Katharine! It is not Miss Seymour, but yourself, whom I love. I am bold in thus risking my present happiness, which consists in dreams of you, for I know not whether you will even give a favourable hearing to my appeal, but I stake all my visions of bliss, upon this venture to realize them.”

Elsie heard no more. The voice was Cecil

Montagu's. She knew it and listened no longer, for she had heard enough. She walked quickly from the spot and did not pause until she reached her room, of which she closed the door for sometime, and then came forth and spoke to her father.

Montagu and Kate were still absent when luncheon was announced. When they returned Mr. Seymour met the former, and told him that he feared he must go to London with his wife and daughter that same evening, upon unforeseen business. Cecil wondered and endeavoured to persuade, but Mr. Seymour was inexorable.

Elsie had revealed to her father the condition of the sisterhood. She was able to influence him, and spared no pains to persuade him that her immediate presence in London was absolutely necessary, for that bailiffs were in the house, and the whole establishment falling to ruin. Mrs. Seymour learned the



news from her husband and easily acquiesced in her daughter's determination. By five o'clock they were travelling to London, and no one knew that Elsie had overheard Montagu's declaration to Katharine.

CHAPTER V**FRANK AND EMMELINE.**

FRANK ELLIOTT was busy with his preparations in London and was thrown much into the society of the Mordens who invited him, almost daily, to dine at their hotel.

Sir Edward was frequently called away by some important law business upon which he was engaged, and, as Frederick was often attended by Lady Morden and Emmeline, whom he consulted about his purchases, Frank had

various opportunities of meeting them. Lady Morden's youngest son was at Eton and came to town to spend a day with them, when Elliott was asked to accompany them to the Zoological Gardens. While Lady Morden and Frederick were busily exhibiting the animals to the delighted school boy, Frank conversed with the lively and pretty Emmeline.

"Was Elsie Seymour enjoying herself at Thornwood?" enquired the latter.

"Yes, I should think so, for she was the life of the party. We were to have acted a play, but I could not remain for it. Some one else will probably have taken my part."

"You were not the hero, I hope; or your desertion might break the heroine's heart," said Emmeline sarcastically.

"Mr. Montagu was, of course, the hero and Miss Seymour his heroine," replied Frank, slightly nettled.

"Elsie his heroine!" returned Emmeline,

who added playfully: "do you remember that we once entered into a treaty never to praise each other?"

"A very unfair and one sided compact!" rejoined Frank, who was secretly pleased by her question.

"How so?"

"It is much easier for you to keep it than it is for me. I never perceive that you show the slightest inclination to praise me, whereas I am always burning to express my feelings."

"Ha! ha! ha! well that is good fun!" exclaimed the merry girl: "how do you know that I am not equally anxious to praise you? You would like me to say all sorts of pretty things of you to your face. Well, supposing I do, I should make up for it by abusing you behind your back. That is the way you do, I have no doubt. When you are with Elsie Seymour, I dare say you tell her that you think Emmeline Morden an insipid little flirt."

"I have never even dreamt of such a thing."

"What is the use of hearing flattery, when one may be certain that it is invariably more than counterbalanced by abuse behind one's back?"

"All praise is not flattery," returned Frank somewhat sententiously.

"A beautiful moral sentiment out of a copy-book!" retorted Emmeline. "'All praise is not flattery,' would look well in text-hand. I will suggest it for mamma's school."

"You are too bad—too cruel!" rejoined Frank.

"There is some truth at last."

"Well I will make peace on any terms you choose," said Frank.

"Nay, we will keep to the same terms. Do you think you will return to Thornwood before you leave England?"

"For one day, I think. You are going, I believe?" enquired Frank anxiously.

"Yes, I hope so."

"It is a pretty place, but I did not quite think the style suited to English comforts."

"What a prosy view to take of it. I hope you admire its owner?"

"Oh! y—es! But—"

"I fear that his admiration for Elsie has made you jealous."

Poor Frank was in despair.

"No, I do not admire Miss Seymour. I should never be jealous of others loving her. I dare not tell you, Miss Morden, what I really feel, lest you should be vexed with me."

"Do you dislike Mr. Montagu?"

"No, not at all; but I fear that—that you like him."

"Really, that is amusing. What fun! So you have the coolness to pretend to be jealous on my account. That is the height of audacity and flattery! I shall never forgive you. But, look there. Mamma is talking to that odious

Mr. Bateson—that eternal man! who would have thought of meeting him at the Zoological Gardens?”

And there was the short, round, flabby epicure, standing by the monkey-cage talking to Lady Morden and Frederick.

“Emmeline dear,” said her mother as she approached: “Mr. Bateson tells me that the Seymours are in town. I hoped we should have found them at Thornwood, but it seems that they returned last night upon urgent business.”

“Where are they staying, mamma? I should so like to see Elsie.”

“Are they at their usual quarters at the Burlington?” enquired Lady Morden of Mr. Bateson.

“Yes,” answered the old gentleman. They seem to have had bad weather down at Montagu’s place, and were not looking, I thought, in high feather. I only saw the young lady for a moment. She is full of her high flown

schemes, I suppose. I am told that she has to draw pretty freely on her father's bank to keep her hobbies afloat."

Emmeline shrugged her shoulders and her mother replied :

"What hobbies are those? I should not have fancied that Miss Seymour's favourite occupations would have entailed any expense?"

"Oh! don't you know? She is a kind of amateur *sœur de charité* and has established a convent upon the most approved principles; only unfortunately the *petit luxe* seems to stretch her father's purse strings rather wider than he may quite like, hereafter."

"I heard something about it, but I did not know that she had actually established such an institution."

"Oh! I fancy you may see the *religieuses* walking about in the most admirable costume. I cannot say that I have yet fallen in with them, but I heard that they were all falling out for want of funds. Now-a-days you can

do anything for money, but when you cease to pay they strike ; like my friend Lord Clarewood's hermit, who was paid eighteen-pence a day for sitting in the hermitage in the park, wearing a cowl and pretending to chew acorns, but who struck because they would not allow him beer in addition to his pay."

"You are very severe upon Miss Seymour's scheme of benevolence," said Lady Morden.

"I should think Lord Clarewood's hermitage would look all the better without the sham hermit. Fancy any one submitting to such a lazy life !" rejoined Francis Elliott.

"Oh ! there are many people who lead lives just as lazy," remarked Emmeline, glancing slyly at Mr. Bateson, "but, who do not pretend to eat acorns."

The hint was lost upon Mr. Bateson, who was anxiously contemplating the monkeys and expressing a wish that he were one of them.

"I often visit these gardens at this hour and, even, at this unfashionable time of the year,"

he pursued, "in order to see the animals fed. It delights me to watch their enjoyment in eating. It only wants a few minutes of the time when the fish are thrown in for the otter to eat. I beg you will come and see it."

Lady Morden assented and accompanied Mr. Bateson, while Emmeline lingered a short distance behind, conversing with Francis Elliott.

"Is Mr. Elliott going to honour us with his company at dinner to-night?" enquired Emmeline.

"He will be delighted to do so."

"Has not mamma asked you?"

"No."

"Well, I ask you; so you may come. Be sure you do. It is, however, upon condition that you talk no nonsensical flattery."

"I'll promise to be very obedient and good," returned Frank.

"That is well," replied the laughing girl.

"But if I come to dinner, I must leave now, as I have to go to my chambers first."

They had joined Lady Morden, who, at Emmeline's suggestion, repeated the invitation in a low voice to Frank, who presently made his adieux.

He set off to walk at a good pace towards Lincoln's Inn Fields, with his heart full of Emmeline. The image of her bright face haunted him and every word which she had uttered recurred to his memory. He wondered whether she returned his feelings and endeavoured to flatter himself into a favourable construction of some of her enigmatical phrases. The incipient lover is very sanguine of success when he is not as deeply depressed through fear of failure. Hope and fear succeed each other at rapid intervals. At one moment he determined that, before going abroad, he would reveal his passion, while the next instant it struck him that the revelation might be premature, or would, most certainly, meet with a repulse. "But yet," thought he, "she cannot altogether dislike me—when I accused her

of partiality to Montagu she did not seem annoyed. Perhaps she could love me? Who knows? I will say something before I leave England." And then there occurred to him the still greater difficulty of what he should say. It appeared an awkward time to make an offer just upon the eve of leaving, and there would also be a great risk of rejection were he to propose upon so short an acquaintance. It might be safer to seek some means of strengthening the intimacy and ripening her friendship into love.

Would she write to him, he thought, or would she allow him to send her occasional notes? Or might he not enclose sketches and little messages in Frederick Morden's letters? Then sundry objections flashed across his mind and he hurried forwards, as if to escape the unpleasant doubts.

Thus rushing along, he had not exactly selected the shortest road, and found himself

near the British Museum. As he was entering Bloomsbury Square, his eye rested upon a lady advancing rapidly along the pathway, in whom to his surprise he recognized Elsie Seymour. She was closely followed by a woman in a dark nunlike dress, who seemed to find it difficult to keep pace with her.

If Elsie were aware of the recognition, she did not appear conscious of it, but, taking the middle of the street, passed on.

"How strange," thought Frank, "that *she*—the idolized beauty—should so suddenly have quitted Thornwood and have turned into a recluse."

As his imagination dwelt upon this vision of Elsie, for a moment he almost wished that his adored Emmeline possessed more of her steadiness; but then he combated the thought of treason, laying it down as an axiom in his mind that no blue-stocking could make a good wife. "How far superior, after all, is Emmeline to every other woman upon earth!"

With such-like musings of Miss Morden's perfections, Elliott reached his chambers in Lincoln's Inn.

He had been absent from his domicile since the morning, having breakfasted at his club, and had consequently not yet seen his letters.

Upon opening the outer door, he found two epistles in the box, but postponed reading them at the moment, as he was full of Emmeline.

He threw himself into an arm-chair and his eyes rested upon shelves of white calf bindings, which caused a sudden misgiving to come over him and his heart to faint within him.

Emmeline can never be the wife of a poor half-starved barrister even if he himself could have the audacity to think of marrying. But alas! marriage is impossible! hopeless! For years he must pursue the toil and druggery of the law, and meanwhile would Emmeline consent to be engaged to him? Impossible, were

it not that, to lovers, all things seem possible. Sir Edward's large fortune, he thought, might enable him to place her in easy circumstances, for, although the match might not, perhaps, at first, quite come up to his most sanguine expectations, yet, seeing her invincible attachment, &c., &c., the good baronet would yield. Meanwhile he would stick to his profession and, with Sir Edward's interest, which was considerable, would obtain some good appointment—get into parliament—make speeches—come into office—become a cabinet minister—and so the Alascar day-dream was constructed, and had perhaps stood, but for the reflection that, after all, Emmeline's attachment might be as brittle as the Persian's ware.

He arose from his musing and broke the seals of his letters. The first was from an agent at Southampton, informing him that his boxes, containing articles from Fortnum and Mason's &c., had been shipped for Alexandria. The second from Lady Elliott was as follows :

Thornwood. 16th November. 18—.

“MY DEAREST FRANK,

“I wish you could come down upon the receipt of this letter. You will, probably, get it in time to be here by luncheon to-morrow, and can, if necessary, return at night. I dare not trust myself to tell you what has happened. It is, at present, an entire secret in this house. It will be enough if I inform you that your sister's happiness is very nearly concerned, and that we both look forward to your arrival with intense anxiety.

Kate sends her love, and I remain,

“Your own affectionate mother,

“MARY S. ELLIOTT.”

Upon reading this letter Frank's first feeling was surprise. “Engaged to Montagu!

Is it possible?" His next feeling was annoyance at having missed the letter in the morning and having to give up the pleasure of dining with Emmeline. He knew that the five o'clock express would convey him to Thornwood in time for dinner and he felt obliged to write a hurried note of apology to Lady Morden, and start off by the train.

Poets tell us of rumour flying swifter than the winds. When Lady Morden returned to her hotel, after various delays upon the road, she found that Mrs. Seymour's carriage had just drawn up before the door, and felt rejoiced at the opportunity of seeing her. Emmeline was disappointed at finding that she came unaccompanied by Elsie, but determined upon making some appointment to meet her friend.

"But is it true," enquired Emmeline, who was far less discreet than her mother in such matters, "that Elsie is engaged in founding a sort of protestant nunnery?"

"My dear child," exclaimed Mrs. Seymour,

horrified at the report, "where can you have heard such a strange perversion of facts? No; the institution in which Elsie is interested is a most praiseworthy charitable establishment, of nurses for the sick. No doubt the idea was taken from the French Sisters of Charity. You know we have long wanted something of the kind in England. We have no public nurses for the poor, none who are ready, at any moment, to attend gratuitously by the bedside of the dying. This has long been a subject of reproach to our country, and Elsie has united with other ladies in a scheme for remedying this evil. But this attempt does not, in the least, savour of any religious partizanship. She would be the last person to favour anything of an exclusive or sectarian tendency, and all denominations may join in this truly benevolent object. It is catholic in the true, and not the perverted, sense of that term."

"Then, it is not under the Bishop of London?" hesitated Lady Morden.

"Oh dear no! at least I should think not," returned Mrs. Seymour, as the idea struck her that episcopal patronage might have given it favour in the eyes of her friend: "I am speaking without any good grounds. It is quite possible that it may be patronized by the Bishop, at least, I think some of the bishops were consulted about it. I am pretty sure indeed, that this was so."

"It must require great tact and skill to govern an institution where persons of so many opposite sects may join and work together," suggested Lady Morden.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Seymour doubtfully, "but where the object is praiseworthy, good persons can have but one feeling. Of course, those who are influenced by violent sectarian notions, should keep away from it."

"That includes a good many zealous persons now-a-days, I should fancy," rejoined Lady Morden.

"Yes, because so many people are apt to put faith before charity."

"And this institution, I suppose, lays faith aside for the sake of charity."

"It leaves the objects of faith open questions," replied Mrs. Seymour, "but of course some sort of faith is, perhaps, necessary to secure charity. The two go together, but we are getting upon theology."

"When did you return to town?" enquired Lady Morden, equally desirous of changing the subject, "I had hoped we should have met you at Thornwood."

"We only came last night; we left rather suddenly. Mr. Seymour was called to town by some important business," said Mrs. Seymour immolating the truth upon the altar of her daughter's renown.

"What a disappointment this must have been for Elsie!" exclaimed Emmeline. "Was she not in raptures with Thornwood?"

"It is a charming place, certainly, but we

had very unfavourable weather. And then, you know, at this time of year so few places look well."

"You had the Elliotts there, I am told."

"Yes; Miss Elliott seems rather a nice unaffected girl, without very much in her. I cannot understand how Mr. Montagu, who is so accomplished and clever, can have taken such a fancy to her."

"What! do you really think that there is anything in it, and that he admires Kate Elliott?" eagerly asked Emmeline, "I had always hoped he would have married Elsie."

"I used to fancy they might have suited, but I do not think Elsie would ever consent. You will, perhaps, think me partial, but, do you know, I do not think that Mr. Montagu is good enough for Elsie."

"Then do you think," returned Lady Morden, rapidly jumping at a conclusion,

"that Mr. Montagu is positively engaged to Miss Elliott?"

"No, I did not say *that*, but I should never be surprised if I heard that they *were* engaged."

"Kate Elliott engaged to Mr. Montagu!" exclaimed Emmeline, in a voice in which none but the most experienced ear could have detected the slightest trace of *pique*;" I did not think she liked him when they met at Alfreton."

During the conversation the waiter entered the room with a note addressed to Lady Morden, which she opened and read, as follows:—

"DEAR LADY MORDEN,

"I extremely regret that I am prevented having the pleasure of dining with you this evening as I had promised, but I have just received a letter from my mother, re-

questing me to go down to Thornwood immediately, and I am therefore starting by the five o'clock train.

"In great haste, pray believe me,

"Yours very truly,

"FRANCIS B. ELLIOTT.

"17th November."

When she had read the note she handed it to Emmeline, who, after glancing at its contents, exclaimed.:

"So Katharine Elliott is to be the Honourable Mrs Montagu!"

CHAPTER VI.**THE HBY-DAY OF LOVE.**

"WHAT joy to be beloved by Cecil Montagu, that handsome and accomplished man, whose courtesy and grace recall the days of ancient knighthood and the gentlest heroes of romance!"

Such were the secret words which Katharine uttered, as she stood musing in the silence of her chamber. They were words which she strove hard to believe and feel. To do her justice, she even thought them to be true, and yet, with all her self-persuasion, her spirit

was sometimes weighed down by a sensation of loneliness and distrust.

Banish the treason from thine heart thou fair one! The soul should have no misgivings! It is true that thy decision is for life, but not for ever! accept it as the decree of Heaven and pursue it with a heart resigned to God. That which now looms darkest shall shed gleams of light.

The girl stood at her window, her eyes fixed upon the ravine beneath. It is so easy to banish the future when the present beams with joy, that it is not strange that she was soon able to fashion her heart to its altered circumstances and to bask in the love of Cecil Montagu.

In the deep recess of that glen she had given her heart to the seductive man, and from that moment (it was on the previous day) to the present, her life seemed new, and all things to have assumed a fresh aspect. Lady Elliott approved the match, but had written to

consult her son before she gave a final answer. His non-arrival in the morning had caused her some uneasiness, and, in a conversation with Mr. Montagu, she had plainly shown him how entirely the marriage would meet with her approval.

Katharine was no less anxious than her mother, for Frank's expected coming, since she felt a delicacy in spending much time in the company of her host and lover, until the betrothal had been ratified by his consent.

Had he failed, it had been indiscreet in one, usually so punctilious to have proposed on his own domain, but, in these affairs, as in revolutions, success justifies the venture, and Montagu was not one to mistake the chances upon which he staked his reputation for gallantry and honour.

Katharine was gazing dreamily upon the prospect from the window. There was a melancholy softness in the November day which tinged with pathos the musings of her

soul. Who shall picture the dream of a maiden's heart, in its first expansion towards a deep absorbing love? Woman's love is so much more of a business than man's, that, no wonder, it fills and saturates the whole being far more completely. Neither was it in Katharine's nature to treat love lightly. She had felt the vacuum of existence which men supply by the toil and endeavour for which they were created. She had longed and yearned without knowing wherefore. In a moment the void had been supplied, and she seemed to experience the indescribable happiness of an object and purpose in life, some one to care for, and to love. Oh how bright was the vision of her virgin spirit!

Katharine was not an imaginative woman, for although she dreamed, as most women dream, her reveries were enclosed within the confines of possibility and seldom wandered into the region of fancy and extravagance. Her love was all the more enduring in that

she loved a person, and not a hero of her mind's creation, she loved the real Montagu and not a Montagu invested with a halo of romance, idealized to suit her preconceptions.

This real love, though it may see more faults at first sight, is less liable to that terrible revulsion which sometimes overtakes the votaries of an ideal passion. The warm domestic heart of Katharine was created to love once and for ever, and such was the affection which she gave ungrudgingly to Montagu.

Without being deeply religious, Katharine had occasional qualms of conscience and secret warnings, to turn from the vain things of life as no fit toys for her. The Lord knocked at the door, but its moss-grown hinges would not open to receive Him. The fiend had stoned the chambers with dreams of earthly happiness and comfort, and there was no room for Him Who had not where to lay His head.

It may have been some such inward voice

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in the appearance of the wild songstress in her strange costume and a charm in her unearthly voice, which prevented Katharine from addressing her with anger.

"Who are you? what brings you here?" she said, as she made an attempt to pass her.

"I am like thyself, fair lady. I am a victim like thyself—I have loved as thou lovest and believed as thou believest."

"Let me go by," exclaimed Katharine, "you are mad!"

"Ha! mad! It may be, but who made me what I am?"

"Loose my arm," said Katharine impatiently, for the woman had seized her wrist.

"Hear me lady, hear me, and be not deceived as I was. He will deceive and ruin you. Be warned in time."

"Speak not so to me!" exclaimed the maiden, "I know not to whom you refer or

what you mean. Leave me, or I will call for assistance."

"Ha! ha! ha!" and with a wild laugh she let go her grasp and said: "go hence lady, God speed thee. Such as you will not be rescued from destruction. He hath won thy heart, and I have no power to save thee—lay not the blame upon me, fair lady."

Ere she had finished, Katharine had made her escape, following the pathway by which she had come. At first she almost ran, and only relented into a walk as she perceived, from the more distant laughter of the mad woman, that she was not pursued. She hastened onwards, being anxious to escape, not only the raving female, but also her own thoughts. She endeavoured to persuade herself that the words she had heard were the mere wanderings of a disordered brain, but there was, nevertheless, a something in the voice and manner of the woman, which bore

the impress of reality, and seemed to steal her confidence. Katharine could not repress a shudder when she recalled them, for they unquestionably pointed to her betrothed. "Is it possible? Can it be? Oh no! Cecil Montagu is too noble!"

She was walking onwards and had reached a more open glade among the evergreens, when she suddenly found herself in the presence of Montagu himself.

She stopped and blushed crimson. Her utterance appeared paralyzed. He approached her.

"Katharine alone? my Katharine, how happy I am to have found you."

She stammered out a word, and he, fancying, perhaps, that her hesitation arose from timidity caused by the novelty of her position, took her hand in his. She gently withdrew it. It was a first impulse, prompted by female jealousy and then, becoming aware of the

strangeness of the act, replaced it. Montagu did not fail to perceive the chill in her manner.

"Katharine, have I displeased you?" he enquired in tones soft and winning, fixing, the while, his fine piercing eyes upon hers, with an expression beaming with love. "My adored one, whose will shall be mine, whose every look shall, henceforth, be my law, is it possible that I can have said, thought, or done, anything to offend you?"

"No—it is nothing. I was frightened—it is very silly of me to be frightened, you will say; but I met that mad-woman again, whom we saw the other day."

A cloud appeared to pass over the placid brow of the lover, who resumed, in a moment, his accustomed serenity.

"Ha! that woman! I wonder how she got into these grounds—What did she say to frighten you? tell me."

"She spoke incoherently and sang a wild song."

"What did she say? tell me Katharine, what she said?" enquired Cecil earnestly.

"She warned me against—"

"Against whom? against me?" he asked, interrupting her eagerly.

"Yes—at least, against my—lover."

"She did not name me?"

"No."

"She is a lunatic. I have befriended her at times, but she returns me evil. Mad people take dislikes, and she seems to have an especial hatred for me. She raves against me, I am told."

"I was not sure that she spoke of you, for she did not name you."

"Her ravings are about some lover by whom she declares that she was betrayed, but I am told that she also feels aversion to others, and that I am one of those whom she honours with

her maledictions. It is possible that she may trace a likeness between me and some one she has known. An expression, a look, would be enough to suggest such a resemblance to one in her condition."

Katharine felt in some degree re-assured and relieved. The weight was not entirely gone, but her heart was lighter, and Montagu at once perceived the change upon her countenance.

"Katharine!" he said, fixing his bright eyes upon hers, as if to read into the depths of her spirit: "Katharine, my beloved, my betrothed, have I not a claim upon you? May I not ask you to tell me truly, by the truth of your love for me, whether the cloud upon your brow arose from any momentary suspicion of me?"

"I—" she faltered and, casting down her eyes while her face coloured crimson, added, "yes—but forgive me—"

"Forgive thee? Upon one condition only,

my Kate, that you will never suspect me again. Can you not trust me ?”

“Oh ! yes.”

“Do you love best to be called Kate or Katharine ?”

“It is for you to name me. Am I not your own ?”

“Katharine was a name I always adored. It is the name of a beautiful saint. Indeed I believe there were two such. At least, there is *Santa Caterina della Rota* and *Santa Caterina di Sienna*. I think the former is she whom we see represented as borne by angels to her burial. Thou shalt be my *Santa Caterina*, and I would let every votary at the shrines of Mount Sinai or Sienna, know, that I worship a brighter and holier saint than theirs, in my own angel Katharine, enshrined for ever in my inmost soul. My Katharine !”

The lovers wandered to a seat, where they sat down. The time passed rapidly as they

recounted the secrets of their mutual passion. Katharine could not but feel the deep joy of loving and being loved, and her heart expanded to the new sensations as she abandoned herself entirely to their influence.

The days were short and it was already cold and dark ; indeed, none but lovers could have ventured to sit in the woods at such a season ; but, being such, they failed to mark the rawness of the air, and Katharine was scarcely sensible of her imprudence until she felt a sudden chill.

" Shall we go home ?" she said : " I fear mamma may be anxious about me."

" You look pale, Katharine ! We ought not to have sat so long."

Montagu was alarmed. She did not complain, but appeared to shiver with cold.

" It is nothing, it will pass off," she said.

He believed or strove to believe her, but pressed her, nevertheless, to walk quickly.

He besought her to lean upon his arm and, while her hand was gently pressed by that fond lover, the present seemed to be forgotten in the dream of the future. When they reached the house she scarcely remembered the extreme shivering which had alarmed her. The conversation of her betrothed appeared to have effaced every trace of pain and she returned to her chamber with her heart full of that one thought, which was becoming, more and more, the life of her soul.

At her toilet she felt a momentary sickness, which her maid did not fail to remark in the sudden palor which overcast her countenance.

"It is nothing," she declared, when questioned by the attentive abigail, and, at that moment, her mother came to announce Frank's arrival and she hastened to receive his congratulations before dinner. Her sensations were overlooked in the excitement of the hour.

"So you are engaged to Cecil Montagu,"

said Frank to his sister: "well, I am very, very glad of it. I always liked him from—from the first—"

"That is," returned Katharine maliciously, "from the moment you discovered that he was not attached to Emmeline Morden."

Frank coloured slightly.

"You are severe, Kate. However, he is a capital fellow, and I wish you all the happiness in the world."

"Have you seen him?"

"Not yet. He was gone to his room, and I was not sorry as I wished to see you first. Tell me, Kate dearest, all about your engagement?"

"Oh, it is a long story—"

"Do you know, sis, I thought, all along, that he loved you better than Elsie Seymour."

"Oh! I am sure, the more you know him, the more you will appreciate him as a brother. Frank! he is so noble, so generous, so good!"

"When do you wish to be married?"

"What a question?"

"A natural one, sis, as I am starting for the East."

"Must you go?"

"I don't know; my baggage is gone by sea."

"Is it too late to write to delay it?"

"Oh, yes, it is gone. It sailed yesterday from Southampton for Alexandria. But, if it is necessary, of course I must remain for your marriage, for I suppose you are not inclined to wait until my return next spring? "However," he continued, when he perceived that she coloured at his thus speaking to her, "I will talk to Montagu about this. How flushed you look, dearest Kate, tell me what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing Frank."

And before he could satisfy himself any farther, Cecil Montagu had entered the room.

"Oh! Elliott! I am indeed, delighted to see

you ! I could not have hoped such happiness when last we parted. Katharine has told you, I trust, and won your consent ?”

“ It did not require winning,” rejoined Frank, as he shook hands warmly with Montagu : “ you may be sure that I approve, and from most selfish motives, of her giving me such a brother-in-law. I wish I could only promise you as good a brother as, I feel certain, she will make you a wife.”

“ Well, I shall leave you to compliment me in my absence, Frank. Cecil will, I trust, be cautious in listening to your praises and take a brother’s opinions at what they are worth.”

A few moments sufficed for explanations. Montagu was as anxious as Frank to hurry the marriage, and it only depended upon Katharine and Lady Elliott that it should take place within a month or six weeks ; that is, as soon as the settlements and *trousseau* could be prepared.

Presently Kate returned with her mother

and seemed to share her lover's happiness at learning Frank's anxiety for a speedy wedding. Her head ached and she felt a coldness in her limbs, but all this she concealed, and exerted herself to respond to the bright glances of her betrothed, by whom she sat at the dinner-table. The other guests had left that morning, so that Montagu was alone with the Elliotts.

"I wish your sister Mary had been here," said Montagu to Katharine in a low voice, "her presence would have completed our happiness. I long to know the sister of my darling."

Kate thanked him with a sweet smile.

"I wanted Lady Elliott to have written this morning, but she seemed anxious to await your brother's arrival. Pray write to-morrow, or shall I go and fetch her?"

"Thank you, very much," she returned, "I should like it of all things and will ask mamma to-night."

Montagu did not limit his conversation to

Katharine, but addressed himself generally, contenting himself with obtaining, from time to time, the approving looks of his beloved.

"You will enjoy your Eastern tour," he said to Frank: "I cannot tell you how vexed I am that you should be obliged to postpone it. Have you no other companion than Frederick Morden?"

"No."

"You will find him more accomplished at crocodile-shooting than at hieroglyphics, I should fancy. I almost wish, for your own sake, that you had had a more intellectual companion. Besides, the Nile, especially, requires some one who can think and feel with oneself."

Frank perceived the truth of this criticism of one whose chief merit consisted in his being Emmeline's brother, but, for her sake, he felt inclined to resent it."

"I think Fred Morden has more in him than you seem disposed to allow."

"And he will be improved, doubtless, by a visit to Karnak and Philæ, but still, confess, that his tastes and yours, are somewhat different. However, you will have the more time for thought, which is better than conversation. You can draw Edfoo and Kom Ombos while he is shooting crocodiles and wild geese."

"I don't know that he will wait for me. He is impatient to start. Perhaps, I might persuade him to remain at Cairo until I join him."

Montagu turned the conversation into other channels and waited until the servants had left the room, to say :

"It is too bad, Elliott, to spoil your tour, by asking you to remain for our wedding. You will find the Nile so low when you get there that you will see nothing of the scenery, and perhaps be unable to ascend the cataracts."

So saying, he turned to Katharine, whose eyes appeared slightly to reproach him. He caught the hint and said no more.

After dinner they adjourned to the music-room, where Montagu begged Katharine to play the accompaniment to his song.

S O N G.

Queen of the sea-foam ! Our liege Aphrodite !
We never shall chaunt thee a Poem aright,
Until we prefer thee to Herè the Mighty,
Or Pallas, who owns the wise bird of the night.

When Paris was judge, and the three stood before him,
Is it strange, that he kept the bright apple for thee ?
In vain did proud Herè stoop down to implore him,
In vain did Athena vent scorn on thy glee !

Shall the saws of stern Reason, or power of the Mighty,
Ever rival those loves of the heart, which are thine ?
None shall ever dethrone *thee*, my Queen Aphrodite !
Nor erase from *thy* fane one *ex-voto* of mine !

Never had Katharine felt the keen thrill of delight so intensely as at that moment. The melodious voice resounded through the peris-

tyle as she had heard it resound before, and when she ventured to raise her eyes from the instrument, they alighted upon the faces of her mother and brother, gazing with rapture upon the singer, such as might have been called forth by Alcibiades himself. The words of the melody poured forth in a luscious stream, the sounds harmonizing with the classic beauty of the place. All this she might have felt before, but now she knew that the hero was no other than her own beloved one. The accomplished man, with his taste and genius, was her's. She had won the heart which so many coveted, and an interest in the mind which all admired.

"How exquisite !" said Lady Elliott.

"Charming !" exclaimed Frank, "is that your own composition, may I ask?"

"Not the music—at least it is only adapted."

"It is almost original," said Kate to Mon-
n, in a low voice. "It is very lovely."

"So you like it, Kate?"

"Yes—when did you compose it?"

"This morning—it was for you."

"For me?"

"I was sitting musing in my study, when my eyes fell upon the fresco of the Judgment of Paris, and I thought of—of you."

"And who is Heré, and—"

"And Athena, (or Minerva), you mean?"

"I could guess that, but tell me who was your Juno?"

"I don't know. When I was much younger my friends wanted me to marry Lady Selina Howard, but I never liked her."

Montagu seated himself beside Katharine and, unobserved by the others who were engaged in conversation at the farther extremity of the room, took her hand.

"You trust me, Katharine," he said, "whatever failings may have sullied the past, my honour has been untarnished, and I have a right

to yo ur confidence when I pledge you an unblemished future."

" Oh ! Cecil !"

" You trust me ?"

" With all my heart, and without reserve."

* * * *

Lady Elliott had only awaited her son's arrival to prepare for their departure to London. The great question had been as to whether the marriage should take place immediately and before Frank's start for Egypt, or whether it should be postponed until his return. It seemed now unanimously resolved that the settlements should be arranged without delay, in order that the wedding might be celebrated early in December. On the following day not only the Elliotts, but also Montagu himself, left Thornwood for London.

During the night Katharine scarce closed

her eyes in sleep and, early on the morrow, left her feverish couch to prepare for her journey. A sigh escaped her as she quitted the beautiful domain, although its proprietor was accompanying her upon the journey.

CHAPTER VII.

ANN DOLBY.

"WE haven't had no letter, but I supposes *you* hears sometimes, Master Perdon?"

"Yes—oh, yes—she is going on very well, and is preparing hard for the examination."

"What be these zaminations, Master Perdon, I sposes they be hard tasks to learn?"

"They require a good deal of learning, Sally."

"Ah! well, I never was much of a scollard, nor old John neither, and we hadn't none of

these zaminations. They be new things—new discoveries, baint they?”

“Well our Phœbe be a tolerable good scollard, I sposes—she was always peert at learning,” remarked the old man, who was seated in his usual corner.

“Yes she is very quick.”

“I wish you two was man and wife, *that* I do. Please God, I hopes to live to see it.”

“There is nothing now to hinder us from being married as soon as she has passed the training school,” returned Perdon, “as Mr. Lisle intends to raise our salary and make us quite comfortable.”

“He be a right good gentleman, Mr. Lisle,” said old Dolby, “I hear he be going to do up the church and make it very fine.”

“He is going abroad, they say, this winter.”

“More’s the pity, if the winter’s hard.”

“I hear he has set up a soup-kitchen for the village, and intends to leave orders for

coals and blankets for the poor people, at Christmas."

"Yet I had liefer see his kind face among us."

"And yet we cannot blame him for taking his pleasure," remarked the old woman.

"No, no, he have a right to do that," said Dolby,

"And pray who be to dispense with the coals and blankets?"

"The curate I believe."

"It ayn't over easy to please the folks when you come to that," suggested the old man.

"There are some as nothing *will* satisfy," replied Sally; "but tell us, master, when you thinks our Phoebe will ha' done with her schoolin?"

"She will be able to return, I hope, next spring or summer."

"Well, I thank God for keeping her as he has, and saving her by your means. It had like to ha' been another business as bad as

our poor Ann's—you've heerd tell of our Ann. Well, it was but a few nights since, when I heerd her voice, as plain as I hear your's when you speaks. She was in our garden, at least, so I was thinkin and I heer'd some one a sing-sng as plain as possible, but, when I hobbled to the door to see, I found nought, and no one near. May be 'twas her spirit, and she be dead, for we han't heerd on her these many months. I wish, Master Perdon, as you could help us to find out somthing on her."

"I thought she was in the Penitentiary, at Beesleigh."

"She was there, but we han't heerd on her this long while—going on for a twelvemonth, baint it, John?"

"Yes, I should say quite that time, or more," returned the deaf old man, as soon as he had taken in her question.

"How far is Beesleigh?" enquired Perdon.

"It be a good bit from this. I can't tell, not correctly, how far it be, but I should say

not less then ten mile, or may be, twelve. It lies towards Stroud way."

"I could go over there on a Saturday when we've a half holiday. Suppose I go, next Saturday, Sally, and enquire after your Ann?"

"Ah! you be very good, Master Perdon, very good to we. John! Master Perdon will go to Beesleigh to ask after our child, he say."

"Ah!" returned John, whose eyes watered as he spoke, "I thank ye from my heart for thinkin on us. We can't return it to ye, we be fast sinking to our graves, but God will requite it to ye, no doubt."

"Have you seen Mr. Penrose, the new ourate?"

"Yes, the gentleman called on us yesterday, he seems a very pleasant spoken good gentleman. I spose's he be a friend of Mr. Herbert's—or Mr. Lisle, as I should call him now."

"Yes, he is a friend, I believe, of the gen-

tleman who comes to the Court sometimes ;
Mr. Baring, who married Mr. Lisle's cousin."

" A very good gentleman *he* be."

" Mr. Penrose was speaking to me to-day
about—about Phœbe."

" About our Phœbe, John," said Sally by
way of explanation to her deaf husband.

" Ay," returned the old man ; " what does
he want with our Phœbe ?"

" He seems anxious she should come back
soon to be schoolmistress here,"

" Does he know you be to marry her,
Master Perdon ?"

" Yes, Sally, I suppose Mr. Lisle has spoken
of it, for he seemed to know all about her, and
I made no secret to him of anything that has
happened."

" He be quite a different kind of a gentle-
man from Mr. Drislow," put in Sally, by way
of comment ; " *he* be a good gentleman be
Mr. Drislow, but this 'un seems to know the

way of poor folks. I suppose he ha' lived among 'em in big towns."

"Well, Sally, what I was going to say was this. I think Mr. Penrose knows all about Beesleigh, and could help me to seek for Ann Dolby, if I might tell him all the circumstances?"

"What, about our Ann?"

"Well, I will tell him as little as need be, or you might tell him, Sally, but unless I have a letter from some clergyman, I might not be able to go into the house, at Beesleigh. I believe they are very strict there about admitting persons to see any one. I *have* heard it said they don't admit men at all."

"I don't know as there'd be any harm in speaking to the parson," said old John, who had overheard the last part of the conversation.

Having obtained this unexpected permission, William Perdon desired to lose no time in

availing himself of it before old Sally's pride should have operated any revulsion in her feelings, and induced her to revoke her husband's concession.

The November evening was closing in, and Sally was preparing to wash up the cups and saucers. The cottage was half lighted by the glimmering fire in the grate, which cast a dull reflection upon the crockery stored in the shelves against the wall.

"Good evening to you," said Perdon.

"And mind ye do not say too much to the parson about our poor Ann," exclaimed Sally, as he was opening the door to leave the house.

"No, no—I'll be careful—good evening," and William Perdon dropped the latch behind him, and departed, not without a conscience-stricken sensation of having wounded the pride of these good old people, in his attempt to serve them. It was dark in the village lane as he walked towards Welbourne's cottage.

In the same direction stood a farm-house, in which the new curate lodged. After the death of his father, Herbert had succeeded in persuading Mr. Drislow to appoint an assistant, and Penrose was the person who had been selected for that office. He was a man of twenty-seven years of age, of sound views and a truly religious spirit, but who participated rather in the practical sentiments of Baring than in the æsthetical philosophy of Herbert Lisle himself. It was towards the residence of the young clergyman that the schoolmaster bent his steps. The farm house stood back from the lane, in an orchard garden, and was approached by a narrow pathway. The room which the curate occupied as his study was upon the ground-floor, next the porch.

A feeble light shone from behind the blind and Perdon felt so convinced of his being at home, that when the girl appeared, he stepped forward and proceeded to knock at the parlour door without awaiting her answer.

"I think Mr. Penrose be gone out," said the girl, but Perdon had already entered, and found the room deserted.

"But if you like to wait, sir, I think the gentleman will be in directly," she continued.

Perdon said he would wait.

The curate had quitted the house half an hour before, for the purpose of finding a book, which he had left in the vestry, and, intending to return in a few minutes, had omitted to extinguish the candle upon his table.

The truth is, that upon reaching the churchyard, he had been startled by a strange moaning sound. The evening was dark, and the noise seemed to proceed from the more lonely side of the edifice, *that* nearest to the shrubberies of Cawthorne Court. He paused to listen. There was a something so unearthly in the tone, that, had he been of a superstitious temperament, he might well have been terrified, but Penrose, was not a man to

be alarmed by trifles, even were he not deterred from such feelings by a strong, and well directed, faith.

Before entering the church, he determined to ascertain the cause of the groans, and for this purpose, made the circuit of the churchyard. They became more distinct as he approached the shrubbery and sufficient light remained to enable him to distinguish something white upon the grass.

"What is the matter? who is there?" he called out.

Repeated sobs were the only reply to his question. He drew nearer and heard them more distinctly.

"My God! my God! have mercy on me—on *me* a poor lost sinner."

"Tell me," said Penrose, in a gentle soothing voice, who are you? what are you doing in this place?"

At first there was no answer.

"Can I help you?" he continued, "I am the clergyman of the Church; one sent to assist poor penitents in their search after a Saviour."

"Thank God?" was the reply of the female voice. "Thank God for answering my prayer—did He send you to me?"

"I am Christ's ambassador, and He sends me to help his stray sheep to return to His fold. He is the Good Shepherd who came to save sinners. Are you a sinner?"

"The worst of sinners, too bad for pardon."

"The very one for whom He died. It was expressly to save sinners that He came. Come, and be saved."

"Come and be saved! Are you an angel of God? How can such as I be saved?"

"Are you truly penitent? Do you loath the sins you have committed?"

"With all my soul I loath them."

"Do not lie there upon the damp grass. Come with me and tell me how you have

offended God ? I am His minister and steward. Perhaps He may grant you consolation through my means. Come !”

The woman arose from her crouching position, but the darkness concealed her bewildered expression.

Vincent Penrose was young and new to the situation in which he found himself. In his timidity of youth he shrank from the strange duty which had devolved upon him.

Human weakness rendered him somewhat faint-hearted, but he uttered a secret prayer, and remembered that he was a priest of God, and that his sacred office demanded a sacrifice of his natural timidity, where the great work of Christ stood before him.

“Follow me,” he continued as he led her through the Church door, and, having kindled a light in the vestry, enquired : “tell me, are you a stranger here ?”

“I am and am not. I am a native of this village, but have been away from it many

years. I am a terrible sinner and, sir, if you would not disclose it, I would open my heart to you as God's minister and tell you all."

"Disclose it! God forbid! Do you wish to declare your grief at once?"

"Yes, sir—to confess all—all, without reserve!"

The tears and sobs interrupted the kneeling penitent as she repeated the falls of which she had been guilty. The curate cautioned her against revealing the names of others, and she blamed no one.

She was a native of Cawthorne. A handsome stranger who was staying at the court had seen her first in church and afterwards in the village. He conversed with her, and, her fancy being caught by his flattery, she allowed him to make arrangements for her to accompany him to Cheltenham, where he promised to marry her. She had a friend, (one Mary Fawcett) whose name she used as a veil. This friend was in service there and she pretended

to visit her for a short period. Her lover had gone so far as to name the day for their nuptials and, in the meanwhile, had placed her in a handsomely furnished lodging and dressed her like a fine lady. She was sufficiently beautiful for him to feel proud of her looks and invite some of his more intimate friends to visit her house. One of these was remarkable for his accomplishments and being younger than her admirer readily won her sympathy by his unfailing tact and affability. Circumstances, of which she knew nothing, suddenly called away her lover upon a distant journey, but he left her well supplied with money and made a strict promise of a speedy return. During his absence Allardyce (for such was the name by which her lover's friend was known to her) frequently visited the house, but without once endeavouring, to insinuate himself into her confidence or, in any way, to win her affections. Such was the chivalrous delicacy of his friendship,

that he avoided all topics which might tend to alienate her heart from her more aged lover, and confined himself to an attempt to elevate her views and lead her to a desire for self-improvement. He had, beyond all men, the faculty of clothing learning in attractive garments and inspiring others with his own devotion to a tasteful philosophy. It is true that the so-called wisdom of such men is pure epicureanism. With them the whole universe is made to contribute to the increase of physical and intellectual enjoyment. Science and art are treated as ministering to the pleasures of the mind and perceptions, and even toil and study themselves, are only used to heighten the contrast of relaxation. The conversation of this enlightened epicurean could not fail to awaken in her soul a thirst for knowledge. She was induced, in her lover's absence, to engage masters of languages, and learn other accomplishments. Her daily lessons gave her fresh subjects for discourse with her clever friend.

Her intercourse with Allardyce, and the intellectual occupations into which he enticed her, had the effect of arresting the progress of that malady of the imagination under which she was labouring. The higher thoughts gave her a distaste for him who now appeared unworthy of her love. She began even to loath the man who had induced her to leave her home, and to hate the notion of a life-time spent with a being, who, from his conversation, was evidently void of all sympathy in her intellectual pursuits.

After an absence of many weeks, her lover unexpectedly returned and, finding her entirely absorbed in the new studies for which his friend had given her a taste, grew jealous and convinced himself (not without some show of reason) that his friend had won her affections. His hasty temper was aroused and he abused Allardyce to her face. She, at first, meekly expostulated and defended her instructor, whereupon he flew into a passion and

seizing her books, threw them into the fire. Her pride was nettled. She left the room, and retiring into her chamber stripped herself of her finery and trinkets and, resuming the humble peasant garb in which she first came to Cheltenham, departed from the house, and went back on foot to her father's cottage in Cawthorne.

She returned not as a christian penitent, to weep at her Saviour's feet. She came in indignation and pride of heart, loathing her fault, simply because she had quarrelled with her lover.

Few words passed between her parents and herself. The old home seemed to have no charms for her now, and her life was one of utter wretchedness. After a long struggle with her pride, she wrote a letter to Allardyce telling him, without reserve, of all that had befallen her. She was unacquainted with his address, but Mary Fawcett knew one who had formerly been his valet and enclosed her

letter to her friend, requesting him to ascertain it. Luckily the man was aware that his master had been wont to make his Al-Raschid rambles under a feigned name and was able to forward the letter to its destination. Ann Dolby (for she it was) received a reply from Allardyce urging her to banish the past from her thoughts and live a life of industry and contentment. A series of letters now passed between them. The reports in the village were such as to cause her to be an object of general remark. She could bear it no longer. Old Parson Drislow came, not like Christ's messenger to say "neither do I condemn thee," but, to stone her with accusations and reproaches like the Pharisees of old. She fled away and, having sought her friend Mary Fawcett, wrote again to Allardyce, informing him of the step she had taken. He sent her a kind reply and some money, inviting her to avail herself of a retirement which he would procure for her, to enable her to avoid a life of

idleness. She was touched by his generosity and loved him with the purest flame she had ever known. He had not once addressed her with words of flattery, and the thought of passion never appeared to cross his mind. She felt that she could trust implicitly his every word and motive, nor did he betray the confidence she reposed in him.

A neat cottage in a retired part of Surrey was prepared for her reception, and here she took refuge in her hour of need. A tasteful garden surrounded it, and the interior was well furnished with books. The philosopher sought to lead her from sin to virtue by alluring her from base pleasures to high æsthetical enjoyments. He would occasionally encourage her by a passing visit and a few brief words, but, at such times, he seemed distrustful of himself and would not remain long in her society. His imagination was gratified by the philosophic task, which he had undertaken, and he sought no other reward than to lead a beauti-

ful woman to an appreciation of virtue, by cultivating her mind and drawing forth her latent talents. He placed a steady matron to superintend the domestic arrangements of the cottage, and so the months sped by in a long dream of happiness.

But the woman's heart was not entirely satisfied by the cold philosophy which tempted Allardyce to his task. From the first moment, her soul was enthralled by an all-absorbing master-passion. She adored the unselfish hero who had rescued her from a life of folly, and strove, with all the ardour of love, to make herself worthy of one whom she could not believe to be altogether indifferent to her. She endeavoured, and with tolerable success, to cultivate her intellect and acquire the accomplishments of a lady of his position. There was a French-master in the neighbourhood and she took lessons in that language, and soon made herself an adept. She studied its literature, and then found means of making herself

equally well acquainted with the tongue and poetry of Italy. Her benefactor was enchanted with her proficiency, and suggested that she should perfect herself by a year on the Continent. He found a German lady suited to the situation, and sent her with Ann Dolby, to visit France and Italy.

Allardyce was in Rome. Some months had elapsed since he had received tidings of his *protégée* and her duenna, whom he imagined to be still loitering at Sorrento, where they had spent the summer and early autumn. He was surprised, therefore, when walking on the Pincio, to meet the two women accompanied by some young Germans, with whom they were conversing. Thinking himself unobserved, he turned aside from the broad walk and watched Ann Dolby and her companions with considerable anxiety. It was natural that a feeling of distrust should overcloud his mind. "Am I right," thought he, "in giving her the means of living a life of idleness and thus throwing

her in the way of fresh temptations?" His conscience reproached him, and he determined to make an effort to save her from this apparent danger, by replacing her in a position for active exertion. "She is now sufficiently instructed," he thought, "to be a governess," and he made up his mind that this would be the best course for her to pursue, and that he ought to lose no time in making her acquainted with his plan.

His *protégée*, on the other hand, was drinking deep into the cup of intellectual pleasure which he had first raised to her lips. She had always been fond of poetry and, even when residing in her cottage in Surrey, had frequently beguiled her leisure moments by the composition of verses. In her villa at Sorrento she studied the poets of Italy and sought to reflect, in her own tongue, the high Christian musings of Dante and Petrarch.

Religion was a new thought to Ann. The little she had learnt of it, as a child, could have

made no deep impression and had probably been regarded as a school task. Besides, she appeared to have cast off the whole of her peasant life, like the forsaken shell of a chrysalis and to live, a butterfly, in the sunshine of Allardyce's graceful philosophy. The epicureanism which he professed, without absolutely discarding religion from its panthéon, would treat it as one of the influences by which the affairs of men are regulated or controlled. The temples of religion, with their music and art, are worthy adjuncts to that philosophy of the senses, which may accept them without their accompaniment of asceticism. The Cross of Christ is the stumbling block in the way of these lovers of the beautiful. Take away the Cross from its altar and St. Peter's itself would be a fair temple for a panthéistic worship, such as Allardyce sometimes sighed after, in his secret musings.

To say the truth, bare panthéism is seldom enough to satisfy the cravings of a woman's

realizing fancy. If Ann ever dreamed of such a system, it was because she felt divinity in the person of Allardyce, and made him the idol of her heart. When she was wont to see him, from time to time, she entertained no other longings; his image satisfied her imagination, and she fed continually upon the thought. During the summer, at Sorrento, she had no longer these occasional glimpses, whereon to nourish her passion. His letters were brief and few, and there were moments when she felt as if he had entirely forgotten her. Not that this could dim a love which was born and nurtured without the slightest encouragement from him, and of which he was as unconscious as the sun of the flower which imbibes its radiance. However, absence could not fail to soften down the enthusiasm of her passion, and, without lessening its hidden force, to give it a more sober aspect. Her days were spent in agreeable studies and, in the evenings, she would wander with her companion through the gardens and vineyards around.

A small church stood by the road which they usually pursued and, at the hour of sunset, they were wont to see the peasants gathering around and crowding through its doors for their daily worship. Curiosity first led her to intrude, and she beheld, with pleasure, a large congregation of worshippers upon their knees, chaunting the responses to one of the litanies of the Roman Church. This was followed by the Benediction service, in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, and where the whole congregation join in the exquisite stanzas beginning: "*Tantum ergo Sacramentum.*" She knelt down among the peasants and experienced, almost for the first time in her life, the full beauty of religious worship. The words were strange to her ears, and she scarcely understood the very sight presented to her eyes, but, with all its novelty, this service spoke far more to her heart than all the sermons she had ever heard from the lips of parson Drislow. When she

had left the church, her companion, who, though very lax in her religion, had herself been bred a Roman Catholic, explained the meaning of the service, and lent her a book in which it was contained. She returned each evening to the church, and soon found herself joining in the responses and the hymn.

The German lady was no enthusiast, and felt alarmed at the conduct of her friend. She had received a letter from Allardyce, directing that, towards winter, they should pursue their route northwards, and she, somewhat abruptly, hurried her away from the neighbourhood of Naples, to Rome.

Upon the eve of their departure, Madame Hoffner (such was the lady's name) fell in with two acquaintances from her own part of Bavaria. One of them was much struck, at first sight, with Ann Dolby. They were also on their way to Rome, and Madame Hoffner did not object to their engaging the same vetturino. Arnstein, the new

admirer, was an artist of the Overbeck school, and also an accomplished scholar. Ann was much struck with his conversation upon subjects in which she began to feel a keen interest. He was no less pleased with the unaffected enthusiasm with which he found himself able to inspire her. Art, poetry, and religion, were the principal subjects upon which he dilated. He spoke as one whose whole soul was imbued with the poetry of art. It is true that he was wanting in the extreme polish of Allardyce, but this seemed almost compensated by the greater enthusiasm of his nature. By the time the ladies had reached Rome a warm friendship had sprung up between them and their two companions.

Arnstein was one of those *dilettanti* in religion who adopt its poetry without its cross. His imagination was enthralled, but his heart unchanged. Under a veil of faith, he was no better than an Epicurean philosopher. The society of Ann Dolby afforded him pleasure,

and he reconciled it to himself upon his general plea of studying human nature in its varied aspects. He was happy, during his leisure hours, to lionize his friends among the endless sights of Rome. In that city of all time there is something to gratify almost every intellectual aspiration, and he found a thousand opportunities of kindling her enthusiasm and gratifying her ardent fancy.

It was one Sunday, after they had attended vespers at St. Peter's and were walking on the Pincio, with their German acquaintances, that Allardyce met them, unobserved. He was so much vexed at the apparent familiarity between them, that he felt as if all his good purposes towards his *protégée* had utterly failed. He sent his confidential valet to trace out their abode, and make enquiries respecting their mode of life. The man returned with a report that the two ladies had arrived in Rome, accompanied by some German artists, who never missed a day without escorting them

about, and were their almost constant companions at meals. He also learnt that the younger lady, Ann Dolby, seemed to be more particularly intimate with the artist Arnstein.

Allardyce could not fail to be indignant with what he learnt from his valet, who had not hesitated to colour his story. He wrote a letter to Madame Hoffner, enclosing a sum of money for her services and a letter of credit, sufficient for their journey to England, and told her that the reports which he had heard prevented his taking any farther interest in Ann Dolby, unless she either married respectably or resolved to engage herself in a situation as governess, or undertook some other useful employment. In either of those cases he should be glad to assist her, but, otherwise, he felt it wrong to encourage idleness, which seemed to be tending to a vicious course of life. In his postscript he informed her that his next direction would be Malta, whither he was about to proceed without delay.

The letter of Allardyce was a great blow to Ann Dolby. Amid her romantic day-dreams, she had never forgotten the idol of her heart. She regarded her other enthusiasms as secondary to that one object of her life, the endeavour to render herself worthy of him, and fit for his society. Her dreams at Sorrento, her conversations with Arnstein, were simply to improve and raise herself to the high standard of Allardyce. Nothing could be purer than her motives. It was a terrible shock to her woman's feelings when she perceived that her conduct had been misconstrued. His letter did not simply disappoint and grieve her, but it also inflicted a deep wound, from which she felt she could never recover. He had cast her off! what a fearful blow to endure! When her companion handed her the letter, she read it two or three times and laid it down without uttering one word of complaint. She left the room and walked forth alone from the house, without knowing where she was going.

In the meantime Madame Hoffner, who resented the conduct of Allardyce, determined to leave Rome, and she prepared for their homeward journey. Many hours had elapsed, but Ann did not return. Arnstein called and, to him, the duenna betrayed her anxiety and showed the letter, informing him of all she knew about her friend. The artist loved her, and was interested in the history. He sallied forth, determined, if possible, to find her. The enquiries he made, led to no result, and, hour after hour passed away, while he wandered through the various quarters of the city. He stood upon the Capitol at sun-set, and, seeing the church of the Aracæli open, entered it, in his anguish of mind, to seek the calm which such a place is calculated to engender. His eyes rested upon a female form kneeling before an altar, and he fancied he recognized the dress. He was not mistaken—it was Ann Dolby. He watched her long before he ventured to interrupt her sacred medi-

tations, and, when, at length, he did so, she started at his voice. He gently raised her, and whispering his errand, led her from the church. She took his arm and he escorted her through the streets towards the lodgings which she and Madame Hoffner occupied.

She called him Allardyce, and spoke to him in her own language, of which he had but a slight knowledge. He perceived that she did not know him, and thought it best to humour her in what he conceived to be a temporary wandering, caused by the shock she had experienced. She allowed herself to be conducted, without a question, until, they reached the corner of the *Via della Croce*, in which their lodgings were situated. There she seemed suddenly to recover her perception of the locality, and, stopping short, entreated her companion not to take her into the presence of Madame Hoffner. She no longer addressed him as Allardyce, but spoke in German. He asked where she would go, but she was un-

able to answer, and contented herself with protesting against being reconducted to the lodgings. He endeavoured to expostulate, but she remained firm. He spoke more strongly, but she turned away and would not advance one step towards the house where she had lived. Arnstein felt that his position was conspicuous. The passers by could not fail to notice a lady and gentleman thus contending, at the corner of the street. He was perplexed, but thought it the safer course to escort her to his own studio, and send for Madame Hoffner, who might prevail upon her to return with her.

In the meantime, Allardyce had not left Rome. After sending his letter his conscience reproached him with a want of due caution in depending so entirely upon the report of another, and he determined, before starting upon his journey, to sift the matter for himself. He found out the lodgings, and called upon Madame Hoffner soon after Arnstein had

left her, in search of Ann Dolby. From her lips he heard the whole history in its true colours and was, at length, made sensible of the fact that he himself was the secret object of the girl's adoration. He was startled at the discovery, and it occurred to him that the best thing would be, if possible, to marry her to Arnstein. He arranged that Madame Hoffner should call upon him on the following day, to report whether Ann had been found, and he contrived that she should be interested in obtaining the result which he desired, by delicately promising a gratuity upon the marriage.

Madame Hoffner, concealing her resentment under this influence and, finding that her friend refused positively to return to the lodgings, accepted her countryman's invitation, and remained at his house. Allardyce obtained a secret interview with Arnstein, in order to ascertain his intentions towards Ann Dolby. The artist appeared to be prompted by none

but honourable feelings towards her, but to be unable to marry a wife without a dowry. Allardyce, who had already done so much for his *protégée*, did not scruple to complete his good work. He offered, upon Arnstein's marrying her, to give her a dowry, which to the German's ears, sounded most ample. The good Bavarian returned home and was accepted by Ann, who persisted for some time in calling him Allardyce.

She married Arnstein and they lived happily together for five years, during which period they had two children. The artist was passionately enamoured of his English wife, and proud of the admiration which she excited. The life they led was a very happy one. She rarely left his side but to attend to her children or to the domestic economy, and would sit for hours in his studio watching the progress of his toil, suggesting improvements in his designs or in the blending of his colours. During the three last months of summer it was Arn-

stein's habit to make an artist's tour, or sometimes, to revisit his native land. His wife accompanied him upon these excursions and, little as they could afford the additional expense, nothing would induce her to remain behind.

It is true that she was subject to long fits of depression and melancholy and that, in her broken slumbers, she occasionally repeated the name of Allardyce. Had Arnstein been of a jealous disposition her conduct might have caused him much uneasiness. Happily his good temper and industrious habits gave no room for any such feelings on his part. He attributed all to the shock she had received, and imagined that time could not fail to efface the painful impressions from her mind.

It was some five years after their marriage when Arnstein was summoned to Bavaria by the death of his father, whose property he expected to share. His wife would not be left behind, and they set forth with their two chil-

dren. Having never seen Venice, they determined to make a *détour* from their route in order to become acquainted with that lovely city of the wave. They were delighted with the canals and palaces of that unrivalled seaport, and remained longer than they had intended. They were gliding through a narrow street when they were encountered by another gondola. Arnstein had not perceived it, but was suddenly aroused by a piercing shriek from his wife, whose hands were out-stretched towards the boat. It was Allardyce! He either did not see her, or feigned not to notice and, in a few moments, was out of sight. The artist was alarmed at the expression upon his wife's face, whose cheeks were white as marble, and who said not another word during their excursion.

Upon their return to the lodging, she seemed ill, and in spite of the attentions which he lavished upon her, turned from him in disgust. He was irritated by her unusual conduct and,

almost for the first time, spoke in anger and upbraided her with loving another. She gave him a withering look of indignation, but uttered not a single complaint. He felt miserable and, leaving the house, wandered he knew not whither. It was late ere he returned, and his wife was nowhere to be found.

She had fled and had carried off her two darlings with her. She sought Allardyce at the principal hotels, but no one knew him. An Englishman, such as she described, had left that morning for Padua, and she embarked in a gondola determined to follow and to find him. At Padua she learned that some one like her hero had gone thence to Verona, whither she continued her pursuit. When she reached that city, the money in her purse was exhausted and she was at a loss how to proceed. If she was insane there was method in her madness, for she remembered, that, when travelling with Madame Hoffner, she had possessed a letter of credit upon a banker at Verona. How-

ever this did not serve her much, for when she called at the bank, she found the man indisposed to advance money upon so uncertain a security. Fortunately an Englishman entered the room while she was petitioning for a sum, however small, until she could repay it. She had been urged to this humiliating step by the thought of her children's suffering for want of food. The stranger appeared touched with compassion and, addressing her in her own language, offered her some assistance. On turning towards him she recognised, in her countryman, Herbert Lisle. He did not appear to remember her, and she thanked him warmly, as a stranger, telling him that she accepted his bounty for the sake of her children.

Poor Arnstein was utterly overcome by the discovery that his wife had forsaken him and, after making enquiries for her in all directions, he was enabled to pursue her to Verona, where he found her living upon the money bestowed by an English stranger. He did not address

her in anger, and seemed entirely prostrated by her conduct. She wept like a child when she saw him, and addressed him as her Allardyce—her own adored Allardyce. He was fatigued and ill. It is possible that the germs of his malady might have existed previously and were called forth by the terrible excitement he had undergone; but, whatever may have been its origin, he was laid up with a fever which soon led Ann to despair of his recovery. Day and night she watched by his bedside, with a patience worthy of the most devoted of wives. Had it not been for the kindness of the landlady, the children would have suffered from her neglect, for her thoughts seemed concentrated upon her husband. A physician came night and morning and prescribed cooling draughts; but, when questioned by the anxious wife, could only shake his head through fear of raising hopes, where all hope was gone. When the doctor knew that he was a member of the Roman church, he sent a priest, who

heard his confession and administered the holy sacraments. He breathed his last. The poor widow, in her bewilderment, fancied that it was all a dream. When the truth dawned upon her, she remained for some days in such a state of prostration, that the landlord began to fear for *her* life as well, and that his custom might suffer from two deaths in his house. He forced his wife, against her better feelings, to prevail upon the widow to shift her quarters to a neighbouring hospital tended by some religious women.

No sooner was the removal suggested than she appeared suddenly to recover her strength. She proudly demanded her bill and, finding a sufficient sum among her husband's effects to pay it, lost no time in leaving the house. The expenses of Arnstein's illness and funeral had so exhausted her resources, that what remained barely sufficed for her journey to Milan. Arrived there, she found herself once more in a state of destitution. Had her mind been un-

affected at this time, she might have written to her friends in Rome, and procured a sufficient sum to carry her to Munich, in order to assert her children's right to a portion of their grandfather's property ; but she was still raving for Allardyce, and her one desire was to return to her cottage in Surrey. By a singular chance she again met her late benefactor, whose face recalled the earliest associations of her life. She was wandering with her children along the Corso, when she saw Herbert Lisle and was emboldened to address him, as they had been crying with hunger, and her proud heart was subdued. She accosted him and, thanking him for his past kindness, besought him to lend her some money, which she promised to repay. Herbert questioned her. She was much changed in appearance since she had left Cawthorne and, from a poor peasant-girl, had assumed the appearance of a lady of high birth; and it was, therefore, not strange that

he never for one moment suspected who she was.

"How was your distress caused?" he enquired.

"It is a long story, sir," she replied: "if you will pardon me, I would rather not reveal it. If you will lend me the money I promise to repay it."

"And you wish me to trust your simple word?" rejoined Herbert, puzzled.

"You know me. I am not a stranger. Cawthorne village has not given me much that I value, but it gave me birth."

"Cawthorne? Indeed! Are you Ann Dolby?"

"The same. If you will take care of these poor children, I will struggle home as best I can."

"Ann Dolby! And do you want me to enable you to return to those on whom you have brought so much sorrow?"

"I brought sorrow? No! I was deceived

by your own uncle, sir—by Arthur Winslow.”

Herbert turned away his face, and reflected for a few minutes as to the course he should pursue.

“If I enable you to return to England, what do you propose to do when you get there?”

Her real intention was to seek Allardyce, and to place her future conduct and prospects in his hands. She feared to reveal this to Herbert Lisle, and remained silent.

“If I find a home for your children, will you give me a pledge for your future behaviour, by following for a season, a life of retirement?”

“I have money in Rome,” she began, and immediately hesitated. It was part of her infatuation to connect her late husband with Allardyce, and she felt as if it were sacrilege to speak of him to one who had only known her as a Cawthorne peasant.

“Money in Rome! And yet you want to

return to England. Can you not write to Rome?"

Yes—let me think. I can write to Steinbock, the sculptor."

"I am going to Rome this winter, but you had better not delay until then. Is your money invested, or in a bank?"

"I don't know—it was Arnstein's—it was my husband's."

"Your husband?"

"He is dead. He died—" and she stopped short and looked down upon the ground.

Herbert could not make her out. There was such a strange mixture of wildness and earnestness in her manner, that he was perplexed as to what he ought to say, or do.

"When were you married?" he enquired.

"Married? I was married five years since."

"What was his name, if I may venture to ask?" enquired Herbert timidly, as if he feared to harrow up her feelings.

"His name? Whose name, sir? Allardyce?"

"Allardyce! He was an Englishman then!"

"Arnstein was not an Englishman."

"Arnstein! was Arnstein your husband, or Allardyce?"

"Oh! do not ask me! for God's sake do not ask me."

And she sobbed like a child.

It was not unnatural that Herbert's conclusions as to her past life should have been less favourable than she deserved, and yet, he felt more than ever, intense pity for her.

"Who was the sculptor you mentioned in Rome? Can he assist you in procuring your husband's money?"

"Steinbock! yes—I will write to him."

"You had better write and await his answer here, as it may be necessary for you to go to Rome yourself."

"Never ! I will never go to Rome !"

"You have painful associations connected with it ?"

She did not reply for some minutes, and then suddenly fixed her dark eyes upon him, and said :

"Well ! I accept your offer, sir ! I will go wherever you choose so long as you will promise to take charge of these children. Give them to my mother, if you please."

"And the money in Rome, what is to become of that ?"

"I will write to Steinbock."

"Can you trust him ?"

"Yes—he was Arnstein's best friend."

"Is there much money ?"

"I fear not—we had some debts. He has left a few pictures in his studio, painted to order, and for which the money is still owing."

"Arnstein the painter ! I was once in his studio. I had not heard of his death. Were you his wife ?"

"Yes."

"And who was the Allardyce of whom you spoke? Have you been twice married?"

In the wildest conceivable manner she fixed her black eyes upon him, as in anger, and then turned to walk away.

The children had left her side and were stooping in the dirt. Herbert felt the absurdity of the long conference in the corso, but could not allow her to depart without alleviating her distress.

He took some piastres from his purse, and, following her, muttered some kind words about her children, as he placed them in her hand. He asked her where she lived, and, seeing that she hesitated, continued—

"It is for your children's sakes I ask. I will take care of them."

She informed him and, visiting her during the day, he induced her to write to Steinbock and await his reply. Arnstein's effects were worth little and most of his pictures were un-

finished. He owed money to his landlord and others, and Steinbock, acting for his widow, consented to a sale of the goods, which turned out less profitable than was expected. The good-natured sculptor determined she should not suffer on this account, and, although poor himself, he sent her a sum out of his own pocket, and prevailed upon a mutual friend to finish Arnstein's pictures, so as to ensure her the payments for such orders as he was executing. Steinbock also wrote to Arnstein's married sister, near Munich, to inform her of his death and to make the family aware of his having left children entitled to inherit that portion of his father's estate which would have accrued to him. The sculptor was uncertain how far Arnstein had been justified in his expectations, and did not choose to raise hopes until he could establish some grounds for them, but it was unfortunate, as it turned out, that he made no mention of these claims in his first letter to the widow, whose husband, fear-

ing disappointments, had forborne to enlighten her upon the subject of his prospects. It was not until Steinbock received Madame Kügler's reply that he wrote to urge her going to Munich, in order to assert her children's rights. This letter arrived too late. In the meantime, finding that she could hope for nothing more from Rome at present, and entirely ignorant of the Bavarian expectations, she was persuaded to travel to London, where Herbert Lisle undertook to meet her. The money sent her by Steinbock defrayed her expenses on the road. Upon her arrival in England, Herbert strongly urged her to allow him to take her children to Cawthorne, even, if she would not herself consent to seek reconciliation with her aged parents, for upon this point she appeared determined. There was a settled purpose in her mind to find Allardyce and to place her future life at his disposal. The monomania was so artfully concealed that, but for her occasional wild looks and motions, Lisle

would have imagined her in a perfectly sane state of mind. He was, however, sufficiently alarmed by these symptoms to consult an eminent practitioner in cases of lunacy, who expressed much fear of her actual derangement, and advised him to persuade her to seek a place of retirement for a season, rather than urge her immediate return to her parents.

The Penitential Home at Beesleigh in Gloucestershire, suggested itself at once to his mind as an appropriate retirement for her under the circumstances. He wrote to the superior of the institution, detailing, as far as he knew, the peculiar features of the case, and was able to induce her to admit Madame Arnstein as an exceptional inmate to associate with the sisters, rather than the ordinary penitents.

It was more difficult to persuade the widow to avail herself of this refuge, but, rather than return to Cawthorne, she yielded to Lisle's entreaties. Her children were placed under the

care of old Sally Dolby, who regularly received a weekly payment for their support.

The house at Beesleigh, was situated on the bank of a picturesque ravine, in a lovely part of Gloucestershire. The calm, and religious discipline of the place were highly beneficial to Ann's mind. She found peace in the services of the church, and, when they were concluded, would remain, at times, for hours, in private prayer. She would often open her heart to the superior, and would also unburthen herself to the pious chaplain of the institution. The superior, who felt interested in her story, induced her to write to Steinbock, who did not know where to remit the sums which he expected to receive for Arnstein's pictures. The sculptor was absent from Rome, when the letter arrived. It was, in some respects, unfortunate that the superior should have suggested a course, tending to reawaken thoughts and desires which had lain dormant for many months. From the moment of sending the

letter, Ann's anxieties seemed to revive. She took less interest in religion, and occupied her mind with vain schemes. The good chaplain perceived the change, but thought it was temporary and hoped that, by gentle discipline, she might be won back to her former calm. The superior felt grieved at what she had done, and endeavoured to soothe her by religious conversations. Ann perceived that she was watched and, retiring within herself, became more wrapped than ever in the secret worship of Allardyce.

One evening she made her escape from the house, and fled with such articles of dress as she had contrived to secrete, and some money which had remained in her possession. She proceeded straight towards Surrey, where he, her adored one, lived. Her old cottage was disposed of, but she was enabled to rent a small and rather ruinous tenement near it, and then she set about enquiring for Allardyce, whose name, to her surprise, was unknown in those parts.

She lingered about the spot for several months, in almost hopeless anxiety, never speaking to any of the peasants around, unless to purchase her scanty supply of provisions, or to ask for Allardyce.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the cot which she inhabited, was a wooded knoll, upon the slope of which stood the remains of the Roman Villa, where Kate Elliott met with her adventure. This wild eminence was her favourite resort. Upon its solitary heather-grown bank she loved to sit and improvise wild melodies. Her madness seemed, at this period, to vent itself in the poetical effusions, for which she had always had a taste. She composed airs of the greatest beauty, and strung together a series of words, of which the very discordancy tended to express the peculiar bent of her aspirations. Any who chanced to hear her songs, were charmed with the syren rhapsodies, and would listen to her strain in wondering admiration. The countryfolk were at

a loss what to make of her, for her former residence in Allardyce's cottage had been so private, that they did not recognize her.

One day she had sought her favourite seat, and was gazing dreamily upon the prospect, when two horsemen approached, intent upon examining the Roman ruins. Neither of them noticed her at first. Her head was turned aside as they rode by, and they were deep in conversation; nevertheless, she caught the unmistakable sounds of her adored one's voice. It was indeed himself, her long-lost idol, Allardyce! In an instant she had sprung to his side and, uttering a faint cry of recognition, swooned upon the ground. The courteous Montagu, for it was he, dismounting, gave the rein to his friend, and raised the fainting woman from the earth. He placed her upon the bank, and, finding no water, sought the nearest cottage, whither, by the help of some labourers, he afterwards carried her. Cecil Montagu poured water upon her temples and

she returned to consciousness, while he was leaning over her pillow. It was her own Allardyce! So like a dream it seemed, that she closed her eyes as if to banish the illusion. The felicity was too great, and she dared not believe her senses.

Meanwhile, perceiving that she was recovering, he left the room, confiding her to the care of the cottagers, tenants of his own, to whom he gave directions to afford her shelter for the present. When she next opened her eyes, he was gone, and when she repeated his name, no one knew it. The poor people bestowed every attention upon her, and endeavoured to calm her impatience to leave the cot. She asked who it was that brought her thither, and was puzzled by the discovery that Mr. Montagu was her Allardyce.

The peasants were unable to detain her, and she returned to her own cottage. On the following day she enquired for the abode of the long lost hero of her dreams, and discovering

the beautiful glen of Thornwood, approached the terrace of that lovely Pompeian Villa, where Cecil Montagu lived. There was a merry sound of voices upon the terrace. Thornwood was filled with guests, come down from London for a few days of country relaxation, amid the gaieties of the season. Fair daughters of fashion were strolling among the bright parterres of that exquisite terrace, while the loveliest of all was reclining upon a marble seat, over which the handsome Montagu was leaning and conversing.

Ann Arnstein had ascended the steps, and stood for an instant surveying the novel scene. Her own adored one himself was before her. It was more than she could endure and, forgetting her humble garments and the fashionable party assembled, hastened to cast herself at the feet of her Aillardyce.

A momentary look of horror came over the face of Montagu, who had time to retreat ere she had thrown herself on her knees. He be-

sought the astonished lady with whom he was talking, not to be alarmed at the freaks of a mad woman, and drew her gently from the spot. He then called a servant, and ordered him to lead Maddme Arnstein from the terrace.

The widow uttered not a word, but silently gazed on Montagu, and when the man attempted to hurry her off, walked forward without resistance.

Montagu informed his guests that she was deranged, and then, sending for his valet, despatched him in pursuit with a purse containing some sovereigns. The man overtook her before she had left the grounds and, addressing her kindly, gave her the present. She took it and dashed it to the ground.

“Go tell your master that I spurn his money. I came to seek his counsel, not his gold ! to open to him my heart, to tell him all that I *have* suffered and *will* suffer for love of him—” and her utterance was drowned in sobs.

From this time her madness became more demonstrative. She returned frequently to Thornwood Glen and, in its tangled paths, gave vent to her wild songs. More than once she met Montagu, who having made enquiries which enabled him to trace her history from the period of her husband's death determined, for the present and until he could obtain information concerning Arnstein's family, to procure her confinement in the county lunatic asylum. A doctor was sent to report upon her case to the authorities but, suspecting the purport of his visit, she cleverly feigned soundness of mind and, soon after his departure, took flight. She wandered into Gloucestershire and hid herself in the woods near Cawthorne where she was seen by Herbert Lisle at the period of his father's death. When she imagined herself safe from danger she once more returned into Surrey, where she again beheld her Allardyce bestowing upon others the admiration and love which it had been the one ambition of her life

to obtain. She had once met him alone and, throwing herself at his feet, had commenced an explanation, from which he turned away. He believed her to be insane, and was afraid of trusting himself in her company. His slight upon this occasion wounded her more than all, and she began to hate the man whom she had once so dearly loved. She looked upon him as her heartless betrayer, and vowed that she would thenceforth warn others of his snares. Her songs assumed the tone of injured innocence and she regarded Katharine Elliott as a fellow victim of his seductions. Montagu had, perhaps, no real cause to be ashamed of his share in her history, but may have hesitated, for more reasons than one, to explain her true story to Katharine. The first meeting was under circumstances which he might feel unwilling to disclose, and the subsequent training might awaken jealousy in one to whom he could never entirely explain his generous purpose. All this may account for Montagu's

behaviour after Katharine's meetings with the mysterious stranger. He was annoyed at her return into the neighbourhood and, having called to give her notice of his intention, informed the authorities of her presence. She again escaped, and having consumed the supplies with which Montagu had been able to furnish her, unknown to herself, returned in a tattered and mournful condition to the village of her birth and earliest years.

One night she sang one of her plaintive melodies in the very garden of her father's cottage, and wandered the next day into the woods of Cawthorne, where she lived upon the charity of some poor people who recognized her.

At length, like the repentant prodigal, she seemed to come to herself while famishing upon the husks, and felt that she had sinned against Heaven, and would return to her father's house. When she approached the village church of her early years, a host of recollections crowded

upon her memory, and she was completely overcome by the burden of sorrow which had weighed her down. She sat upon a low tombstone, and gave way to the terrible grief which oppressed her. At length, the darkness having overtaken her, she profited by it to kneel upon the ground and vent her anguish in sobs and prayers to God. She prayed for pardon and mercy at His hands, she did not ask for peace. Her prayers were from her very heart for, however great her insanity, she could still pray; and, as surely as her's was a prayer of faith, so surely was it heard. God sent her succour in the person of his priest, to whom, as we have seen, she was enabled to open her grief.

The confession was never disclosed and must have been very different in form and substance from the narrative of her life which we have just recorded, but it was nevertheless sufficient to awaken the curate's interest to such a degree

that poor William Perdon had, after a long period of anxiety, fallen fast asleep while awaiting his return.

"You may save yourself the trouble of going to Beesleigh," said Penrose, when he had listened attentively to the schoolmaster's errand, "she is at this moment in old Dolby's cottage, where she has been received like the returning prodigal."

Perdon heard enough to satisfy him, and returned home full of anxieties upon the subject of his betrothal to one whose aunt had led so singular an existence.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLOOMSBURY SISTERHOOD.

ELSIE sat in a scantily furnished chamber before a table strewn with books and papers, toiling at her scheme of mercy. There was, perhaps, a trace of sorrow upon her brow, but she sought relief in the hard work which lay before her. Her unsubdued will led her to fight fearlessly against the remains of her passion for Montagu and, amidst her occupations, she endeavoured to conceal the wound which he had inflicted upon her proud heart.

Her true relief would have been in humility, but she knew not yet the pathway of the cross.

By degrees she had reorganised her sisterhood and, by her own personal exertions, had infused new zeal into its operations. The house had also assumed somewhat more of a religious character, for Miss Thompson had declined remaining unless she could have some kind of family prayers twice a day. The departure of Miss Barnes, (Sister Eliza,) had facilitated this innovation which was hailed as an improvement by the rest. Since her return to London Elsie had almost taken up her abode in the house, and felt more and more resolved to give up her home and devote all her energies to this good work. She felt as if society could have no farther charms for her and that she would willingly separate herself entirely from the vanities and vexations of the world. She had always had her own way with her father and mother, who were accustomed to bow with submission to her fancies and opinions, but

Mr. Seymour began to feel exceedingly anxious now that his daughter's whims were tending to exclude her from a world in which she was so peculiarly qualified to shine. He determined to exert every influence within his power to divert her from resolutions which would not only deprive her mother and himself of her companionship, but might, he felt convinced, at some future day, be a source of regret to herself. He was racking his brain to devise some temporary diversion, when Frederick Morden chanced to ask him whether he had ever been up the Nile. The idea suggested itself at once that he might induce Elsie to make an Eastern tour before she settled down to her life of devotion. She had seen Italy, but Egypt and the Holy Land would be new to her, and would call forth all the aspirations of her enthusiastic nature. He now only awaited a suitable opportunity to make known a proposition, which had already obtained his wife's approval.

Unconscious of these projects, Elsie employed her genius in the practical details of her scheme. She organized the work of the sisterhood and afterwards went forth herself to visit and tend the sick. She appeared to concentrate all the energies of her mind in the one object, and to obtain an unfailingly fortunate result.

While she sat writing letters, a visitor was announced, who, to her surprise and pleasure, turned out to be Emmeline Morden.

"Mamma has allowed me to come and see you," she said, after she had kissed her friend: "only think, she would not let me come at first. Wasn't it a shame? I think she fancies that you will make a nun of me, and put me in a dark cell, and I don't know what! Is not it ridiculous? But I did so long to have a talk with you, my own dearest perfection, Elsie! How I wish I was like you?"

"Inspite of the veil and the black cells!" replied Elsie, laughing.

"You are just the same as ever, I see," returned Emmeline: "you don't even seem to me to have on a proper nun's dress. You ought to have a pretty dress to show off your blue eyes. Hoods look much better than those brown bonnets that I see all your sisters wearing. They are hideous things, I declare!"

"Well, will you draw a costume for us, such as you fancy?" asked Elsie.

"Yes, I'll buy a doll and dress it up as a pattern nun of the Elsie Order, and it shall stand over the chimney of the refectory," returned Emmeline, laughing merrily.

"Have you been in London ever since I came back?" enquired Elsie, at length.

"Yes—we were going to Thornwood, but Mr. Montagu's engagement obliged him to us put off. Oh! and have you heard? Kate Elliott is dangerously ill in London. She caught a fever and has been nearly dying."

"How very shocking!" exclaimed Elsie,

forgetting all her jealousy. "Where is she staying? I should like to go and see her."

"She is staying at her aunt's in Wimpole Street."

"And the marriage?"

"It is postponed. Even if she recovers it will not take place until the spring, I am told; so that, when she gets better, Fred thinks that Mr. Elliott will start with him for the East. He had made up his mind to set off alone, but is now waiting for his companion to join him. It would be very shocking if poor Kate were to die, but I do wish Mr. Montagu was not engaged to her."

"Why not?" enquired Elsie, with seeming indifference.

"He ought to have had something better; somebody like my beautiful perfection!"

"No, never!" returned Elsie, in a momentary pique, and, then changing the conversation, resumed—"What is the matter

with poor Katharine Elliott? Was it a sudden illness?"

"Mamma heard she caught a bad cold at Thornwood, and was unwell before she left, and that, very soon after their arrival in London, the fever showed itself. We heard she had been delirious yesterday, but the answer to our enquiries this morning was that she had passed a better night."

"Poor thing! I wonder if papa and mamma have sent to enquire."

"I suspect," said Emmeline, "that Lady Elliott has taken upon herself to postpone the wedding, as it may be some time before Kate gets strong, and she would not wish to detain Mr. Elliott in England. I should scarcely think, however, that he would start until she is out of danger. I fancy, after all, that Fred may have to go without him."

They were interrupted by other visitors. Lady Morden called for her daughter, and soon afterwards Mr. Seymour came in.

"Papa ! I hope enquiries have been made at Lady Elliott's, or rather at Mrs. Fortescue's in Wimpole Street, about poor Katharine Elliott, who, I hear, is dangerously ill."

"Your mother was mentioning it. I suppose we ought to send and enquire."

"Certainly you ought, dear papa. There is no time to be lost. I hear that she is very ill indeed."

"I will call as I return."

"Well—take me with you, papa ! I think I ought to go and see her."

"It is a fever, I fancy, and probably infectious."

"A nurse does not mind infection, dear papa—I don't believe in it."

"I would not go into her room if I were you ; but you can call and see Lady Elliott," said Mr. Seymour, relieved at the prospect of a walk with her, during which he fancied he should be better able to divulge his project than in a seated *tête-à-tête*. The fact being

that he was very much afraid of his daughter, and did not know how in the world to commence.

They had advanced some distance on their way before he began.

"Elsie, dearest, I hope you will not be displeased, but I do not feel satisfied about your spending the winter here, in London. I am sure the House of Mercy can go on for a few months without you."

"Oh! what do you mean, papa?" returned Elsie, in a displeased tone. "It can't, indeed!"

"No—but listen to me—I cannot consent to your spending the winter here. I have thought, and your mamma too, that your health will not stand it. I know all you can say, and I am sure you would be better for a change. You have never seen Palestine and Egypt. Why not visit these places before you settle down to your scheme? Let me advise you to place the institution under one good

head, and give her full authority to manage it as she likes. 'Too many cooks spoil the broth.' I am sure that things went wrong before, for want of this singleness of rule."

Mr. Seymour spoke far more decidedly than his wont, and Elsie became thoughtful.

"Well, papa, you know I have longed to go to the East, but it will be a great trial to me to forsake my House of Mercy this winter. I have just got it into admirable order, and I looked forward to spending the winter in carrying out its objects."

"Come, dearest Elsie, your mother and I have never thwarted you—all I have is at your service. Name any sum you like, and I will make it over to your House of Mercy in order that it may not again suffer for lack of funds. I will place it at your disposal in the bank. But pray be considerate to us, and do not think it too much, just for this one year, to sacrifice yourself by making a tour to the East, which I know you once desired to see."

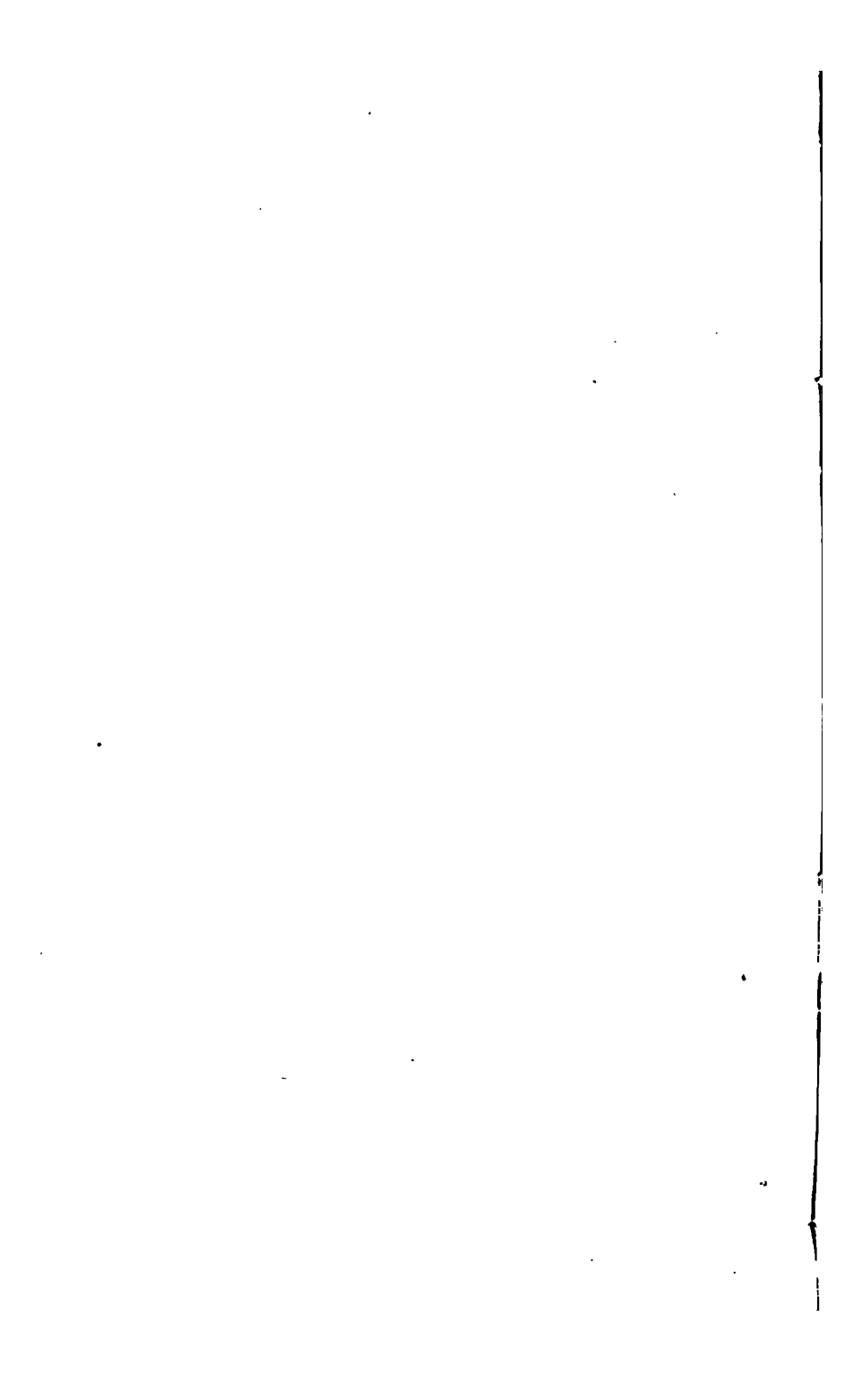
Elsie could not refuse a request thus made her. She was touched by his kind and considerate manner, as well as by his generous offer to support her sisterhood. The Eastern tour was also a happy suggestion, since, while it placed distance between herself and Montagu, it enabled her to visit those scenes which, of all others in the world, most interested her imagination. She yielded, and thanked her father.

Upon enquiry, they heard that Miss Elliott was slightly better, but that Elsie could not be admitted to see her.

B O O K I V.



EASTERN LANDS.



CHAPTER I.

THE ROCK OF ABOO-SEER.

It would be difficult to picture a grander scene of desolation than that which is presented by the second cataracts of the Nile above the village of Wady Halfa. The stream is studded with islands formed of black basalt, of which the bright surface reflects the rays of the scorching sun. The narrow channels into which the river is divided by these rocks of Syënite, assume the form of rapids, and, occa

sionally, waterfalls. As the traveller ascends, in his felooka, he discovers vistas, opening at intervals among clusters of these sombre islets, terminated by the distant sand-hills of the desert or by levels of arid rock still more desolate. Not a sign of life appears, to vary the loneliness of the scene, unless it be, perchance, a single tuft of stunted vegetation, or a solitary vulture winging its way through the clear atmosphere above. After threading the narrow channels, and pulling up the rapids for some two hours, a little felooka approached two sand-coloured rocks to the westward of this chäotic desolation, the southernmost of which was Aboo-seer.

It is from the summit of this rock that the second cataracts are best viewed. The wilderness itself presents no scene of more intense solitude than this. The broad river, flowing among the coal-black isles, seems to add to the loneliness of the surrounding desert, which ex-

tends east and west to the horizon, and is only bounded to the south by the distant mountains of Dongola.

Upon a day in February, the solitude of Aboo-seer was relieved by the presence of two English travellers, accompanied by their dragoman and some sailors from a felooka. The dragoman was engaged in spreading a luncheon under the shadow of a rock; while one of the travellers, seated upon the summit of the crag, was making a sketch; and the other, with a chisel and hammer in his hands, was endeavouring to immortalise the name of Frederick Morden, by engraving it upon the face of the perpendicular limestone.

"I say, Deira!" said the latter, "give us another chisel if you have one. This confounded thing won't cut at all."

"Ma, I no have other chisel," replied the dragoman: "I taught he berry good one. I brought him from Cairo on purpose. Wait; praps I sharpen him a leetle."

"No ; confound it, never mind," returned the other : "I'll make it do. It's only this confounded M that's broken a little."

"Luncheon ready, sir, when you like."

"Hello ! Elliott, old fellow ! are you ready for luncheon ? I'm going to begin."

Elliott was absorbed in a panoramic sketch, and it was not until his companion had made a considerable inroad into the cold fowls and pale ale that he was induced to join him.

"Well, if large letters will purchase immortality, the name of Frederick Morden will go down to posterity," exclaimed Elliott, as he surveyed the result of his companion's toil.

"For aught I know, it is as deserving a name as those of Ramases and Thothmes, and certainly more euphonious than that of Button, which is painted on Pompey's Pillar at Alexandria."

"I'll cut out your name after luncheon, if I can find a soft place where that confounded chisel will cut. Deira has brought a blunt old

nail, which that vagabond, Pini, stuck into him for a chisel."

"I thank you for desiring to immortalize my name as well as your own!"

"Come now! I've never written my name upon a single temple or pyramid all the way up the Nile. It is but fair we should leave them on the rock of Aboo-seer. Everybody cuts his name here; even Miss Martineau and Warburton. I found them both close to my own."

"Three great names!"

"By Jove, look there! What a coincidence just by where we are sitting—Mr. and Miss Seymour; cut by their dragoman, I'll warrant. I wonder how they could have gone by without our seeing them. Depend upon it, that theirs was the boat that passed us in the night, while we were anchored off Ibreem. The names are quite fresh cut."

"So, we've missed your cerulean friend," rejoined Elliott: "your Glaucopis Athenè!"

"Hang her blue stockings," exclaimed Morden: "but all the same, I'm deuced sorry we missed them."

"So am I; she is full of information, and tolerably amusing."

"It is not that; but one likes to meet one's friends out here," returned Morden. "We are pretty sure to come up to them before we leave Thebes. I suppose you don't want to poke in again at all the temples as we go down; I am sure I am bored to death with temples; I don't care if I never see another. The faster we go down the river the better, as far as I'm concerned."

"But my dear fellow," replied Elliott, in a disappointed tone, "we've not half lionised the Nubian temples. We have left by far the greater number to see as we return."

"And you'll be drawing, and deciphering the hieroglyphics! We shall be an age reaching Cairo. Not that I care much, if I can kill a couple of crocodiles. I shall not trouble any

more temples, but shall keep entirely to the shooting. One temple is like another. It is awfully slow work. I bargain for a day's goose-shooting at Edfoo, that place Deira told me of—that's all."

"That will just suit me, for I only half-finished my drawing of the great pylon of the temple of Hor-hat."

"Hor — how much?" enquired Morden : "who is your friend ? any relation to the gentleman you told me what's his name was so shy of mentioning?"

"What ! Osiris ? Yes, exactly. I fancy that Hor-hat was the son of Horus, son of Osiris, whom Herodotus preferred not naming."

"These Egyptian antiquities will just suit our blue friend," remarked Morden : "I have no doubt she's got them all at her fingers' ends, and will write a book about it all."

"Does she draw?"

"Elsie ? I don't know. Yes, by the way, I think she does. I suppose you'll fight

rather shy of her, or she of you, since your sister has robbed her of Cecil Montagu. That was a tremendous blow to Miss Elsie, I should fancy !”

“ Oh ! do you think so ? But she called upon my mother and sister before she left England,” urged Elliott.

“ That may be ; but she was uncommonly sold all the same. Montagu was just the kind of fellow to suit her ; but I suppose she was even a shade too blue for him.”

“ Well, I suppose clever accomplished men, like Montagu, don’t necessarily like learned women,” retorted Elliott, in a voice in which there was a slight degree of pique at his friend’s remark upon his future brother-in-law.

After luncheon, the companions again set to work at their respective tasks and, not until the names of Frederick Morden and Francis Elliott were engraved upon the rock of Abooseer, as a memorial for all ages, did they commence their re-descent of the cataracts.

Elliott could not but enjoy the loveliness of that Nubian atmosphere and, notwithstanding the want of congeniality in his companion, he felt in buoyant spirits, and was secretly elated at the success which had attended his various attempts with his pencil. He could overlook much in one whose greatest merit was relationship to Emmeline. His thoughts would often wander to Alfreton, and many a time did he contrive to send little trivial messages, in the letters which Frederick wrote to his sister.

On their return, they were induced to land upon the western side of the river, opposite the village of Wady Halfa, where Morden, perceiving a gazelle in the distance, set off with his rifle in hot pursuit. Meanwhile, Elliott inspected the scanty remains of a temple of Kneph, and thence returned to the boat to finish his drawings.

The Reis had lowered the mast of the Dahabëeh and prepared the deck for rowing

down the stream ; and, had it not been for the strong north wind which had sprung up, they might have commenced their descent of the Nile that same evening.

"What an awful bore this wind is!" said Morden, as they were seated on the *dewan*, in the porch of their cabin, after dinner, smoking ohibouques. "The mishtamil declares we shall be kept here for four-and-twenty hours at least. I shall be ready to hang myself."

"You can shoot gazelles," returned Elliott ; "how was it you missed that one to-day?"

"I'm sure I hit him, but he ran off, and I feel no doubt of his being dead now. He could never recover the wound he got from my ball. I am convinced gazelle shooting's a fiction, I don't know how to kill the time, I think I shall begin another letter to Emmie, to post at Cairo. Tell me what to say?"

"You can give an account of our row with the sailors, at Korosko, and your thrashing the Reis."

"You promised to copy some drawings on thin paper, to send home."

"Well, I shall be delighted to do them," replied Elliott, unable to counterfeit indifference,

"I almost wish I had agreed to your scheme of going up to Dongola and Kartoum. It is very slow work down here, after all. Everything driven away by the numbers of travellers. I'd give anything to have killed a couple, or even one, crocodile."

"It is too late now, almost," rejoined Elliott, "to get to the White Nile, and I think I'd rather spend the time in going through the long desert, to Mount Sinai and Petra."

"Deira says there's some gazelle shooting in the desert," returned Morden, laying aside his chibouque, and taking a cigar from his case, as he stepped forth from the porch to walk upon the deck.

Frank brought out his journal book and wrote, and then touched up his sketches. When

they awoke, next morning, they were rejoiced to find that the Reis had weighed anchor in the night, and that the Dahabēeh was floating down the stream, and almost in sight of Aboo-Simbel and its four colossi, half buried in the yellow sand.

CHAPTER II.

THE HALLS OF PHILOE.

THE traveller may complain of the tedious ascent of the river of Egypt, with its banks of mud and its vale enclosed by monotonous hills, but there are two exceptions, which even the most fastidious, as well as the dullest, can scarce fail to regard without wonder and admiration. The one is the Plain of Thebes, the other the Isle of Philœ.

At the head of the first cataracts, the basin of the Nile is surrounded with mounds of Syenite, bearing the aspect of a grand convulsion of nature. They are heaps of gigantic stones of black granite, piled up in wild and stern confusion, like a remnant of the Titans' work. Amid these desolate and forbidding relics of chaos, the waters of the Nile lie calm and placid, and the Isle of Philœ, with its terraced banks and graceful fanes, of Isis and

Osiris, rises from their glassy wave. A few palms, springing up among the temples of the sainted Isle, give additional poignancy to that exquisite contrast of peace and desolation. At times, the twin towers of the pylon remind the traveller of some northern minster, and, in certain lights, the basaltic rocks around, recall the woodland hills of oak and yew in our own climes, and lead him to picture some retreat of holy cœnobites, whose perpetual song of praise resounds to the glory of the king of peace.

As became their position, at the summit of the Egyptian cataracts, the temples of Philæ bore a most conspicuous place in the pantheism of ancient Egypt, and when that worship of nature had given way to the faith of the crucified, this isle became a Christian retreat, and its sanctuaries were dedicated to the one sacrifice. And later, when the followers of the prophet were suffered to triumph, for a time, over the Egyptian church, the poetry of Arabia

entwined its tendrils around the ruins of Philæ, and made it the scene of the beautiful romance of *Anas el Wojood*.*

The remote antiquity of the nature-worship of Egypt, that stem from which all the polytheisms of the old world seem to spring, gives intense interest to the temples of the Nile, with their mysterious inscriptions, and their formal sculptures, but none of the divinities of the departed faith, children of Seb,† awaken our sympathies so keenly as Osiris, the unnameable judge, and Isis, the queen of the earth.

It is vain to enquire whether, in the infancy of the world, there was a living man, a bene-

* The story in question is given in Lane's Arabian Nights, under the name of Ansal Wojood, but the island is there transferred from the basin of Philæ to the Persian Gulf.

† Seb, the Egyptian divinity corresponding with Chronos or Saturn—father time.

factor of his species, named Osiris, whose virtue was rewarded by an apotheosis in which he became confounded with the material benefactor of the land of Egypt, namely the everlasting river, which like Osiris, seems, year by year, to rise from the tomb of Philœ; to spread fertility over the soil of Egypt, to struggle with Typho (the power of evil) in the shape of the desert, and to fail and die in the contest, until, the year following, he rises again from his grave, and once more weds fair Isis, the earth, who gives yearly birth to Horus, the symbol of her produce and fertility. The strife of the hero, and the contest of the river, may have become confounded, and embodied into an obscure type and foreshadowing of the greatest of all mysteries, once consummated by the Man-God, but perpetually re-enacted in each one of His countless saints.

It is true that the structures of the island temples are comparatively modern, that is, modern as compared with Medinet Haboo or

Abou-Simbel, being chiefly of Ptolemæic times, but yet, there are few objects better calculated to give a favourable impression of Egyptian architecture than the columns of the principal hall at Philæ. The colours upon the capitals continue bright and beautiful, and give an idea of the utmost elegance of which that ponderous style was capable. It is in that hall that a christian inscription and a christian altar remain to testify, that the heathen fane served as a retreat for the true worshippers.

It was soon after sunrise, upon a glorious day in February, that Frank Elliott, furnished with a sketch-book and a Murray, was rambling among the intricate remains of these beautiful temples. His companion had remained on the boat to inspect the preparations for descending the cataracts, and he had come for a farewell view of what may be called the gem of the Nile. He rowed himself across in the felooka, and ascended the terrace steps like

Anas in search of the beautiful Werd, who, according to the Arabian legend, had been banished to this island with her sixty virgins. He felt exhilarated by the balmy freshness of the atmosphere, and his youthful heart would have rejoiced in some adventure to vary the monotony of this workday world. He wandered up staircases and through chambers and, after a long ramble, sat to sketch the basaltic peak of the adjacent island of Biggèh. When he had finished his drawing, he perceived that it was time to return to the boat, as they were to descend the Cataracts during the morning. He could not, however, resist one last peep at the hall of the painted columns. He longed to linger at every step of that enchanting scene and seemed to dread the moment of bidding farewell to Philœ.

He had passed the outer vestibule and was entering the sanctuary, when his eyes fell upon an object which made him start and stop to

gaze. It was the form of a lady seated upon a block of stone, with a book in her hand, and her eyes fixed upon a sculptured column before her. Well worthy of the fame of Isis, or of the enchanted palace of Werd, was the lovely maiden whom he saw before him, and, in whom he recognized, Elsie Seymour. She was deeply absorbed in studying the thought of the place, and repeopleing the deserted fanes by the force of her creative fancy. For a few moments he hesitated to interrupt her meditation, and then timidly approached, before he ventured to break the silence. Elsie heard his step and looked round.

"Mr. Elliott!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad to see you; we knew you were coming up the river, and feared we had missed your boat."

"We did miss your boat," returned Elliott, after the usual salutations. "You must have passed us in the night, off Ibreem."

"Then you are coming down? You have been to the second cataracts?"

"Yes, and we saw your names on the Rock of Aboo-seer."

"Are you not enchanted with this Island of Philœ?" continued Elsie, "I see you have been sketching, pray let me look at your drawings?"

Frank had never seen her looking so lovely, and it was with beating heart and flushed cheek that he exhibited his performances to the beautiful girl, with whom he found himself alone in the halls of Isis. She bent over his book and expressed delight at the spirit and fidelity of his representations.

"You have not finished this, of Eúfoo?"

"No, I hope to have time to do so as we return."

"Perhaps we shall meet, for we intend delaying there a short time," said Elsie. "By-the-bye, I have not asked after your com-

panion, Frederick Morden ; is he not with you ?”

“I left him in the boat. We are going down the cataracts this morning, and he said he would remain and watch the preparations.”

“I am afraid you do not find much sympathy from him, in your study of Egyptian antiquities ?”

“Not much, but we get on very well together.”

“I suppose,” returned Elsie, “that he undertakes the crocodile shooting, and leaves you plenty of time for your archæological studies and drawing. I see, by your copies of bas-reliefs and remarks, that you take an interest in Egyptian mythology. Here, this temple of Amun-Ra, at Kalabshee, is one of my favourites. How well you have done these sculptures of the triad of the temple. It is certainly strange what an idea of trinity seems to pervade the old worship of Egypt !

Show me your views of Aboo-Simbel. Let me see—is this the little temple of Athor?"

"Here; the temple of Athor, the Lady of Abooshek!"

"Oh! I see," she replied; "that countenance of Athor delighted me beyond anything. I was especially struck with the religious expression of the faces at Aboo-Simbel; some of that unction which breathes in Orcagna and Fra-Angelico. Does it not strike you that, in their religious tone, the sculptures of Egypt are infinitely before those of Greece?"

"What! superior to the Apollo?"

"In religious tone, I say."

"But, can they be compared? Egyptian art is so fettered and conventional."

"Exactly so," rejoined Elsie, "but don't you think that conventionality seems almost necessary to religious art? directly Christian art gave up conventionality, it lost its spirituality, and became material."

"What a melancholy thought that you cannot combine spiritual and physical beauty!"

"Yet so it is—either the body must give way to the spirit or *vice-versa*. One or other must predominate."

"It is certainly true that the Greeks never seem to have hit upon the peculiar tone of feeling which that face of Athor conveys," replied Frank, who, nevertheless, when he raised his eyes upon the lovely face before him, could not agree in her argument, that beauties of mind and body are never combined.

"Have you paid attention to some of the faces of Osiris, in the chamber where his death is represented in this very temple?" enquired Elsie.

"Not very minutely."

"I wanted so much to have had a copy of one of them," she continued.

"I will try and draw it for you."

"I should be so much obliged to you if you would. I have a candle here, for the room is

dark in which it is. I hope you will not think me too exacting," pursued Elsie, who was so wrapt in the subject of her studies, as to be entirely free from that one defect in Egyptian art, to wit, conventionality."

Forgetting all about Fred Morden and the cataracts, Frank accompanied his lovely companion up the staircase of the Pylon, into the death chamber of Osiris, a dark room, of which the walls are entirely covered with bas-reliefs. She held a candle while he traced the figure of which she had spoken. He had never felt happier than when, bending her head to inspect his drawing, she expressed her warm approval of his performance. There was another which she longed to show him, but, as they turned to look, somewhat too suddenly, a draught extinguished the taper. Frank made a movement towards the entrance, and leaning forward, unintentionally touched her face. He immediately apologised for his awkwardness, but he fancied that from that moment she be-

came colder and more distant. She also appeared anxious about joining her father, who was to meet her in the island. Frank felt shy, for, when he gazed at her graceful form and fair face, he seemed no longer to remember Emmeline, and knew that if he tore himself away, he should leave his heart behind, as a votive offering to the Great Dead of Philœ, or, at all events, to his latest priestess.

It was not long ere they met Mr. Seymour, who informed Frank that Morden had given him up in despair, and had descended the cataracts in the dahabëeh, intending to await his companion at Aswàn.

"Look here, Elliott," kindly suggested Mr. Seymour, "you had better come in our boat, we are going down to Aswàn, to-day, and you will be certain to overtake Morden there."

Frank looked timidly at Elsie, while he thanked her father for his kind offer. She had turned away, and seemed absorbed in her con-

temptations, so there was nothing left but to accept.

“ If you have not breakfasted, Elliott, come and have something to eat on our boat. You must be hungry. I suppose you are coming, Elsie ?”

The unwilling beauty was forced to quit her pursuits for a time, but no sooner was breakfast over than she left Mr. Elliott and her father at the table and started off for a farewell view of Philœ. Frank cast a longing look after her, but was forced to conceal his disappointment in the fumes of a chibouque, which was offered to him by the attentive dragoman. The tobacco of Djebail and Latakia is a wonderful soother, and his vexation soon melted into hope.

The Reis of the cataracts had been engaged with several other boats, and could not grant the services of his Nubians until the afternoon, and no boat can go up or down the rapids without the assistance of at least a hundred of these fellows.

Frank sent a messenger to inform Morden of his intended arrival in the course of the day, and, having relieved his mind upon that score, spent the interval in revisiting, for the last time, the haunts which had afforded him so much pleasure. He found himself once again in the chamber of Osiris endeavouring to complete the copies of Elsie's favourite bas-reliefs. He mused upon all she had said and, endeavouring to read the art of Egypt through the interpretation which she had put upon it, began to feel a veneration for that old faith of Osiris which still seems to live and breathe in the sculptures of the Triad of Philæ. Upon returning to the great hall he found Elsie there, and offered her the tracings which he had just completed.

"Thank you, Mr. Elliott," she said: "I am extremely obliged to you for these. You are coming with us in the boat, are you not?"

Frank felt encouraged by her more cordial manner. The fact is that she was not thinking

about him, but was entirely engrossed by the reminiscences of the place.

"Have you deciphered this Greek inscription?" she enquired; "how does it run? '*Touto to ergon egeneto epi tou theouphilestatou!*' is that? It looks like—'*theouphilestatou patros hemon!*' and then there are some words lost, and '*Theodoron ton Episkopon!*' Can you make it out, Mr. Elliott?"

Elliott was not practised at deciphering, and felt abashed at finding himself in the presence of a beautiful girl better skilled than himself at reading Greek inscriptions.

"One cannot help feeling vexed," she continued, "with this good Bishop Theodore for allowing his christian converts to cut away these bas-reliefs of Osiris and plaster over the walls as they have done. They have entirely destroyed the colours by it."

"Perhaps they found the pictures a distraction during their services, for I suppose they had converted this into a church?"

"Unquestionably," returned Elsie; "and, after all, I doubt whether we travellers are right in blaming them as we do. They believed these images to be remnants of the heathenism which it was their object to destroy. One cannot help half envying them their simple faith."

"Miss Martineau is very severe upon them."

"Oh, yes," replied Elsie: "and Leipsius too, of course. It is a great trial to an antiquary to be robbed of the object of his researches, and I scarcely think that philosophers are more tolerant than other people, when any one stands in the way of their theories."

"You think the Christians might have built churches elsewhere, and have left the temples of Isis alone."

"No—I won't say that. This is certainly a lovely hall, and I scarcely wonder at their appropriating it to what they believed to be the true

worship. It was far better than pulling it down. I only wish they could have harmonized its sculptures with a symbolism of their own."

"The superstitions were deeply rooted and probably required extermination."

"You are a puritan, I declare!" exclaimed Elsie.

"No—anything but that."

"Tell me; had you lived in Cromwell's days, should you have been for defacing churches, and breaking stained-glass windows?"

"That was different."

"I don't see it, unless you accept Catholic symbolism, and, if so, why not allow its adoption from other creeds? The Egyptian was the earliest of all. Christianity might have retained and sanctified its art instead of exterminating it. For my part, I confess I have no sympathy with any kind of puritanism,

either early Christian, Iconoclastic, or Calvinistic ! I abhor the destruction of the beautiful !”

* * * * *

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the Nubian Reis with his white turban and black face, grinning and beckoning as he said :

“ Hawagee ! hawagee ! hinna !”

The boat was prepared, and Mr. Seymour was awaiting their return, to commence the descent of the cataracts.

The deck of the Dahabëeh was crowded with rowers, and a dozen steersmen were seated upon the roof of the cabin. The dark faces of the merry Nubians form a pleasant contrast to the red-skinned and less lively fellahs of Egypt. The whole scene was one of intense animation, and all three of our Hawagees (the title given to European travellers) enjoyed the view excessively. Mr. Seymour suggested

their standing upon the roof of the cabins. These rise from the stern of the deck, their roof forming a seat for the steersman, and a place for stowing poultry and lumber. The elevation above the rest of the boat rendered it the best possible position for commanding the magnificent prospect.

"This is, after all, the loveliest view of Philœ!" exclaimed Elsie, as the boat was rapidly advancing towards the head of the cataracts.

"This is the very one I have been attempting, for—for Mr. Montagu," returned Frank, hesitatingly and opening his sketch-book, to compare it for the last time.

"Indeed! let me see," said Elsie, her voice scarcely faltering: "it is a beautiful view."

There was no time to say more, for they had reached the first rapid, and turned to look upon the wild prospect before them. On every side arose desolate rocks of black, shining syënite, similar to that which is found at the other

cataracts. The scene is like a waste of waters, interspersed with barren islets of huge stones. When the earth was without form and void, the primary rocks rising here and there from out the waters, its aspect must have resembled this. There is scarce a single palm to enliven the sternness of this wide-spread wilderness.

The width of the cataracts is very great, and looks even greater than it is, being bounded only by the basaltic rocks, rising at unequal heights in the distance. It is, in truth, the grandest conceivable prospect of stern and savage nature. Had Dante or Milton beheld it, they might have employed it to picture some of those burning torrents of the damned that never-ending desolation, the desert without an oasis or a bourne.

After reaching the first rapid, they soon lost sight of Philæ and its sunny temples and were borne speedily down the narrow channels of the river, among sharp rocks, requiring most dexterous and, at the same time, powerful

steering. Their boat being considerably above the average size and weight, a greater amount of strength was needed at the rudder, notwithstanding which, the Reis of the cataracts, having been engaged with several other parties during the day, had supplied Mr. Seymour with fewer than the usual complement of men. In order to remedy this, they had, at the suggestion of their Reis (himself a Nubian by birth), attached a rope to the rudder, by which they hoped to gain power, and increase the small force at their disposal. This is especially required after the descent of the principal cataract, when it becomes necessary to veer the boat suddenly to the right, so as to prevent its being carried against the rocks facing the rapids.

In ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, from the time of starting, they had reached the principal cataract. The dragoman pointed it out to Elsie and her companions. The men at the oars rowed hard until they came up to it, and the steersmen clenched the rope (which

was drawn round an upright piece of wood intended to serve as a pulley) ready to turn the rudder in an instant.

There was something inconceivably exciting in the scene, and Elsie's heart thrilled with delight. She knew no feelings of terror and felt inspired by the novel sight around her, and enjoyed the sensation of being carried so swiftly along the foaming rapids of the great river.

In a moment the boat was swung down the cataract, the prow being, for an instant, entirely concealed by the waves. It seemed to glide upon the rapid like a sledge upon a *montagne-russe* and then to rise again, upon reaching the level. From the exalted position in which Elsie stood, the boat looked in far more imminent danger than it really was. The only real danger is in the steering.

While the rowers gave a shout of triumph at their successful descent, the men at the helm pulled the rope, which, at that very moment, cracked and broke, so as to throw one man into

the river, and to leave the rest sprawling upon the deck. There was a cry of distress. Mr. Seymour and Frank sprang to the rudder, but it was too late. The boat had struck the rock before they could attempt to turn her. The men staggered at the shock, and for a minute seemed to lose their presence of mind.

Frank was no coward, but, for an instant, he had given up all hope. Mr. Seymour was alarmed for his child's safety rather than his own. Elsie alone remained perfectly collected. She walked coolly up to the least bewildered of the Nubian sailors, and told him to launch the felooka. She called upon others to assist. Her calmness astonished these men, and they obeyed mechanically. The dahabëeh was quickly filling with water, but Elsie was as placid and self-possessed as if she had been in a drawing-room at home. She was seizing a rope, when Frank came up and took it. The boat was launched, and he urged her getting into it. There was no time to lose.

"Mr. Elliott, all depends upon your going in the boat with these men, and pulling us to land with the cable. I will not leave my father. Quick, I pray you! Row off to that nearest point and draw us to land before we sink, or else send back the felooka when you are safe on shore."

Frank was forced into this uncourteous act. Elsie remained upon the sinking dahabēeh. Before her father could reach the prow, the felooka was off, with Frank and five or six sailors hauling at the rope as they rowed towards land. Elsie kept calling to Frank not to pull until they reached the shore, but he could not make the rowers understand, and they continued to tug the dahabēeh with but little effect.

"Elsie, my darling! what shall we do? Have you let the felooka go without you?" exclaimed her father, who then hallooed out to Frank, "Send back the dingey for God's sake!"

"No, no! my dear father—we are all right. Wait till the men land with the rope, and Mr. Elliott will return with the boat."

"We are sinking—look at the water."

"Come, papa, to the other end."

"We shall go down! we shall be lost!"

"Don't be afraid. Look! they are landing, and will soon haul us to shore. We are much nearer than we were."

The heroic girl succeeded in dragging her father to the raised deck at the stern of the boat and there, coolly and without a word, left him and, making use of the Arabic she had acquired, bade the men sound with their oars and poles. The water was not very deep, but the boat was fast sinking. It was impossible it could remain much longer above water.

All this while, the sailors, both in the boat and on shore, were hallooing and screaming, and several fellahs from the adjacent wilds had come to their assistance. Frank and two or three others having left them hauling

at the rope, were rowing back as fast as they could.

"He will be too late," thought Elsie, for each instant she now expected the boat to founder.

Frank rowed with all his might, and encouraged the men by quickening their monotonous chant "Yalla, Yalla," to proceed at a redoubled pace. Many of the sailors from the Dahabëeh had left their sinking craft and swum to shore. One of them, a Nubian, more adventurous than the rest, had landed a second rope which he had first attached to the boat. By hard hauling they had dragged her considerably nearer the beach, and Elsie began to discover, from the grating sound, the reason they had not already foundered.

She was drenched when she rejoined her father upon the cabin roof. The fore part of the boat was literally covered with water, and poor Mr. Seymour was in a terrible state of anxiety and alarm.

"Come, jump into the boat," cried Frank, as he rowed alongside of the dahabëeh, "Miss Seymour! give me your hand, and jump in."

"Here! help papa; I can help myself," and she took her father's arm, and causing him to lean upon Frank's shoulder, urged him to spring into the felooka.

"Where is Achmet?" cried Elsie, looking for the dragoman, instead of immediately following her father into the boat.

"Here am I, milady," said a melancholy voice from the opposite side of the deck, which was presently followed by a drenched figure making its appearance from the ledge which surrounded the cabins; the water streaming from the tassel of his tarboosh as well as from his blue braided waistcoat and trowsers. The latter were turned up above the knees so as to exhibit in a state of nudity his wet and shivering legs. "I been in de cabin, milady, to see if I could save anyting. It all wet! I never saw so wet! De cook be here, wid me. He

berry near drowned, if I had not pull him out and save him."

"Come, make haste. Call him, and jump into the felooka. There is no time to lose."

"Blenty time. We near land."

"Come, make haste. You had much better land and help in drawing the boat to shore."

"No, I assure, milady, you see de sailors jump and push de boat to land, and we lose ebery ting if cook or I no stay in de boat."

And in effect several of the boat's crew had now sprung into the river and were pushing the boat towards shore.

"Come, Elsie! It is really very absurd of you remaining there!" exclaimed Mr. Seymour, in an impatient tone: "do jump into the boat. Here, take my hand and come. You are losing time."

"Elsie smiled, but, without a word, sprang lightly into the felooka, and the party rowed ashore. Frank had not shown any want of courage or presence of mind, but he could not

help being struck, and his vanity perhaps imperceptibly nettled, by Elsie's superiority in both these qualities.

When they were ashore Mr. Seymour became very busy in superintending the operations and Frank found plenty of occupation, whereas Elsie appeared suddenly to retire within herself and to lay aside the heroine for the woman.

"It might have been worse," said her father: "I quite thought the boat would topple over."

"I am afraid the worst is yet to come," rejoined Frank: "I hope, Miss Seymour, you will avail yourself of our boat? Morden and I shall find a lodging at Aswàn for the night, I have no doubt."

"Thank you," returned Mr. Seymour, "I am sure Elsie will be deeply indebted to you."

"It is very kind," added his daughter: "but it seems barbarous to think of turning you out of your boat."

"Oh! we could not hear of anything else.

I am only afraid of your delaying here in these wet clothes."

"There's no danger ; I am not very wet."

"You must be, I am sure, Elsie," said her father, "you had much better come with me to Aswân, while Elliott will perhaps kindly wait and speak to the Dragoman."

"No, indeed, papa, you must, please, let me wait and see our boat safely stranded, I cannot bear to leave our valuables in such peril."

It was not long ere the Nubian boatmen, who were present in great numbers, had moored the Dahabëeh into a shallow creek, where they set to work to ladle out the water, while the dragoman and cook called Frank to their assistance to guard the entrance of the cabin from the Arabs, while they rescued a portion of their possession for immediate use and locked up the remainder.

Frank's proposition was highly acceptable to Achmet, who stowed all the necessary articles

into the felooka, and sent off his master and mistress, under Elliott's escort, while he remained to protect their property. Accompanied by an expert steersman and some good rowers, the little boat sped rapidly towards Aswân. The evening was closing in when they re-commenced their descent, which occupied considerably more than an hour, and the moon had risen over the wild scene ere they came in sight of Elephantine and Syênè. Elsie enjoyed the prospect as ardently as before. She was intent upon the metallic-looking isles of Syénite, and foaming cataracts, of which there were three more to descend, while her father and Elliott were recapitulating the events and dangers through which they had passed.

The finest scene of all was when the moon shed her light over the waste of rock and water, as they approached the termination of their adventure. It was a fine, warm, Nubian

night when they reentered the vale of the Lower Nile, and reached that Ultima Thulè of the south—the far-famed Sÿenè.

The sailors had rowed to their usual monotonous chaunts until they hove in sight of some craft anchored off Aswan, when they commenced holloaing to the crews on board, in order to discover which was the boat of the “Hawagee Inglees,” the “Hawagee Morden.”

Fred Morden had been a good deal annoyed by Elliott's delay, but was not one to take things much to heart ; and, upon learning their adventure, was, of course, quite ready to turn out of his cabin to make room for Elsie Seymour.

“You have no maid with you, then?” enquired Morden.

“Oh ! no—I was recommended not to bring one, and I am sure she would be quite out of her element.”

“Yes, she certainly would have been out of

her element to-day," interrupted her father, rather drily: "for I should not think water was either their accustomed, or, favourite element."

"You are hard upon them, papa, for I am sure mine was very clean. But they would only be in the way here, and would require constant waiting upon. Achmet is my maid. Is he not?" she said, addressing her father.

"Well, I am sure our dragoman, Deira, will make a first-rate lady's maid," replied Morden. "Your clothes must be soaked through, and I will tell him to dry them."

Frank suggested a fire being kindled upon shore, where he and his friend undertook to dry the clothes of their guests. It was late before they were able to converse merrily of their mishaps, over a table spread with the usual Nile fare of preserved soups, curries, and various skilful performances of the Arab cook.

An inspection of the interior of the houses in Aswân had not proved inviting to either of

the hosts and, as it was a warm night, they preferred wrapping themselves in cloaks and shawls, and sleeping beneath the open porch of the dahabëeh, while their cabins were occupied by Elsie and her father.

CHAPTER III.

THE DREAMS OF SYENE.

WHATEVER visions may have haunted his slumbers during the colder portion of the night, Frank awoke with pleasant thoughts of Elsie and her presence in the boat. How stood his heart now with respect to Emmeline? Had he proved a traitor to his earlier passion? Had he forsworn a love which, a short time back, seemed to form a part of his very existence?

It is certain that Elsie had made an impression upon his fancy; an impression which he scarcely chose to acknowledge to himself. His waking thoughts were more unselfish than those of many lovers, for they were not in the least of his own feelings, but simply and solely of her.

He was occupied in recalling her every word and gesture of the preceding day, concluding with her intrepid conduct amid the dangers of the cataract. She appeared to stand before him, proud and beautiful, like a goddess of the old faith, or an Arabian peri, with superhuman powers. She seemed a being of a higher order, formed rather for worship than for love, and it probably never entered his head to compare her with Miss Morden. They were so entirely dissimilar as not to admit of comparison. A few months ago, upon the evening when he first met Elsie at Alfreton, he had almost disliked her and, beautiful as she was, had turned from her to the merry, light-hearted, Emmeline. How was it that this aversion had changed into positive admiration?

Elsie seldom won hearts upon a first acquaintance, for her chief aim was to attract the sympathy of those whose tastes and opinions corresponded in some degree with her own. At a first meeting she was frequently occupied

and Frank offered to escort her, as her father was occupied in looking through the damaged cases in the boat. They started on donkeys, and, accompanied by a guide, approached the spot through the desert.

"That half-finished obelisk," said Elsie, pointing to the granite remains, "is older than almost any ruin in Europe. Is not it strange to think that, while the wild grass still grew upon the seven hills of the campagna, a civilised people were hewing such obelisks out of these quarries as should endure fresh and beautiful, when the buildings of old Rome were in the dust? The obelisk in the *Place de la Concorde* was actually carved three thousand years ago, from this very rock!"

"That at Heliopolis must have come from here," returned Frank, "and it is said to be older than the time of Abraham's visit to Pharoah."

"By-the-bye," rejoined Elsie, "I suppose you are versed in Herodotus? - This morning

I was reading his account of Elephantinè and Syenè. It seems evident that he came up as far as Aswán, but never ventured to Philæ, afraid, probably, of the ropes breaking upon the cataracts, much as ours did. Have you perceived how very indistinct his account of the Nubian Nile becomes?"

"Yes—he speaks of a lake near Elephantinè, by which I fancied he meant the basin round Philæ, but I have not examined the passage very carefully."

"I don't think you are quite such an antiquary as I am, Mr. Elliott, in your feelings. I cannot tell you what delight it gives me to tread the soil inhabited for so many ages, by civilized men. Herodotus, who is called the father of history, and lived so long before the glories of ancient Rome, found Egypt much as it is now. All these obelisks and temples were thousands of years old in his time. Go back three thousand years, and all these things were already venerable and ancient!"

Frank felt that his enthusiasm was not equal to hers, but did not like to own it.

"But is your sympathy," he rejoined evasively, "with antiquity, or with ancient civilization?"

"Yes, well," she returned, "you are, perhaps, right. It is not mere archæology which interests. We must feel some sympathy with the by-gone people whom we study; for, if the flat-headed Indians had existed three million years ago, I should feel no more satisfaction in examining into their history and customs than I do now."

As they returned towards Aswân, Elsie remembered that she had omitted to enquire after Frank's sister. If she had ever experienced a momentary feeling of jealousy, she possessed sufficient strength of mind to banish it at once, and it is, therefore, possible, that her remissness may have arisen from the absorbing interest of the scenes and events around her.

"When did you last hear of your sister?" she enquired.

"I have not heard at all, since we left Cairo, but expect to find letters at Kenèh, or perhaps at Luxor."

"She is decidedly better and stronger, I think you said? I suppose she is no longer considered an invalid?"

"When I last heard, she was still very weak, but gaining strength."

"And tell me, Mr. Elliott, when is the happy event likely to take place?"

"Oh! I think certainly not before my return, in the spring. She was very anxious that I should not miss my Eastern tour. I had given up all thoughts of it when she was first taken ill, but she fidgetted about it so much, and seemed so distressed, that I consented to start.

"It was just as well I should imagine. Do you think she will be married in London?"

"Well, I fancy so."

"Not before June, I suppose, if she is to await your return?"

"I may be obliged to go home sooner. It will probably take place in April or May."

Elsie did not immediately reply, and Frank was wondering whether her thoughtfulness arose from pique or regret, when she continued—

"I hope it may not be delayed, for I believe and trust she will be happy. I really think it will be a very happy marriage, for they are well suited to each other, or, what is better, well contrasted."

"Yes, their characters and even their tastes are rather different," said Frank.

"And yet the difference is not too *tranchant*," replied Elsie.

"Besides; I suppose that tastes soon assimilate where there is deep affection," returned Frank.

"Well, I don't know," rejoined Elsie: "I should think it must be very deep indeed to

change tastes. I confess I scarcely believe in such metamorphoses. I am very incredulous, you see !”

“I am afraid you are rather hard hearted and insensible to—to such things,” returned Frank, slightly colouring at his temerity, which seemed, however, to be lost upon Elsie, who suggested a canter; for the Egyptian, donkeys are not incapable of that mode of progression.

Upon approaching the Nile, near the village of Aswàn, they met Frederick Morden, who gave Elsie a favourable account of the advanced state of the repairs of the boat, and then, turning to Frank, added :—

“I say, Elliott, there are letters for you. We were greeted by a Hawagee’s boat—Hawagee Smith, the Reis called him—and he has brought us a packet of letters from the consul at Cairo. Deira has yours. You will find him, out there, along the shore.”

"No hurry," said Frank, who was not anxious to leave the side of his new heroine.

"Well!" returned Morden, in so doubtful a tone that Elsie remarked it.

"I hope you have had good news from home?" she enquired.

"Yes, thank you, I have heard from Emmie. She tells me to give her love to you, if I meet you."

Whether Elliott was conscience-stricken when he heard of Emmie, or whether there was something in Morden's tone and manner which excited his curiosity, he soon availed himself of a hint from Elsie, and hastened off in search of Deira and the letters.

"I did not like to tell Elliott," continued his friend, as soon as he was gone; "but Emmie says that it is all off between his sister and Mr. Montagu."

"You don't say so!" returned Elsie, without betraying any feeling but grief for Miss

Elliott's disappointment: "but how can it have happened?"

"Emmie seems to have heard very few particulars, but she fancies that Miss Elliott is more in fault than Montagu. I don't know how it is, but I suppose she has jilted him."

"What an extraordinary history!" exclaimed Elsie, perplexed beyond measure at so unaccountable a termination to her rival's engagement.

"If you like I'll read you what Emmie says," pursued the good-natured Fred: "here it is—I have just heard a strange piece of news which you need not communicate to Mr. Elliott unless he hears it himself from another source, but I cannot doubt its truth. It is that Katharine Elliott has heard something about Mr. Montagu which induced her to break off the engagement. Mr. Montagu's friends of course blame her, and say that she

has behaved very badly, but I don't know the rights of the matter and suppose there must be faults on both sides. However, all this is a secret, you know; and I cannot fancy that Miss Elliott can really be to blame. I hope Mr. Elliott has not forgotten my sketches. Oh! but that is nothing. I think I have read you all that she says about it."

"Thank you, very much," said Elsie; "I am very sorry for it, and agree with your sister in scarcely fancying it possible that she can be to blame!"

The Seymours' Dahabëeh was so far dried and refurnished that they expected to sleep on board that same night. Elsie was anxious to see, and determine, whether the cabins were fit for their reception, and availed herself of Mor-den's escort to inspect them.

Meanwhile Frank was seated in the porch of his boat pouring over his packet of correspondence from England.

"London, 17th January, 18—."

"MY DEAR FRANK,

We have received your letters up to the 20th of December, and I am, indeed, thankful to hear such good accounts of your expedition. You will be glad to learn that your sister has been gradually regaining strength, notwithstanding the cold weather. I have been anxious to remove her to some warm place by the sea-side, as I feel sure that these London fogs must retard her recovery. How I envy you the pure Egyptian atmosphere which you describe! Even the clearest days in London are worse, I think, than the dullest I ever saw in Italy! I have a terrible piece of news to tell you, and I scarce know how to set about it. Had it not been for this, Kate might, perhaps, have written herself, for she is now well enough to write; but, poor thing, she is quite overcome with what has happened.

To begin at the *very* beginning, nothing could exceed Mr. Montagu's kindness during the whole of her long illness. He called three or four times a day to enquire, and was always sending grapes and flowers, in short, nothing could be more attentive than he was. Kate will not believe but that he is sincerely attached to her, although now, poor girl, she scarcely ever mentions his name to me. But to resume my sad story. I must tell you that your uncle and aunt Reginald have engaged a German governess for the children, who, according to your aunt's account, is a very superior, clever person, of the name of Hoffner. She seems to have been acquainted with Mr. Montagu in former years, and related a history to your uncle which shocked him most terribly.

"I cannot go into all the circumstances in a letter, but it will be sufficient for me to tell you that there was a beautiful young lady, of whose origin and parentage nobody seems to

know anything, for whom, to say the least, Mr. Montagu entertained the most romantic attachment. It is supposed that she was of low origin, but there appears to have been nothing in her manners to indicate this, and it is quite certain that he spared no pains in educating and otherwise fitting her for the position in society for which he evidently designed her. As was to be expected, he entirely won the affections of the girl, and then, most cruelly, forced her into marrying a German artist, against her will. But the worst part of the history is, that after the artist died, it would appear that Mr. Montagu must have corrupted her whom he had previously refused to marry. It is proved beyond question that, even while he was paying his addresses to Kate, this Madame Arnstein, as she is called, was living close to Thornwood, and was in the habit of walking in the grounds, and, upon one occasion, was certainly visited by Mr. Montagu. Your uncle Reginald, who has

spared no pains in making enquiries into this painful subject, is convinced that she has been removed to some secluded place, where it is probable that he still sees her. Your uncle has taken so much trouble about the matter, that it may seem ungrateful in me to accuse him of any want of discretion, but I do think he would have acted more prudently to have kept the affair secret. Instead of writing to me, or telling me of his discovery, in confidence, he went and published it to everybody else, and it was through your aunt Fortescue that I first heard anything about it. She received a letter from your aunt Reginald, which she showed me. This was just after Kate had a relapse, and was in a state to make me very anxious. I shall never forget what I went through at that time, and how I longed to have you with me to consult in my difficulties.

“It was a terrible trial to break the news to Kate, who, for a long time, refused to be-

lieve a word of it, although I have since discovered that she herself twice saw the woman Arnstein while she was staying at Thornwood, and heard enough from her own lips to have convinced any one else. Poor dear Kate! she behaved admirably, for though she refuses to believe all the evidence that your uncle has collected, and even her own senses, she has given in to my solicitations, and has never said another word or uttered a complaint since I told her how distasteful the match would be to me, and that it could never meet with my approval. I sometimes fear that she frets a good deal in secret, for I almost always see her eyes red when she comes down-stairs. She will not believe Mr. Montagu guilty, and has simply broken off the match—for it is now finally broken off—upon the ground of my refusal. This places me in a very unpleasant and awkward position, and seems to raise a barrier between dear Kate and myself, for

there is no longer any confidence between us. I cannot tell you how distressing this sort of distrust is to me, but we must hope that in time the dear girl will feel what a happy escape she has had, and meet with some one in every way more worthy of her. It is very likely that you may have had a letter from Mr. Montagu, and perhaps from Kate herself, before you receive mine."

* * * *

The remainder of the sheet was occupied with family matters of a less interesting nature. Frank looked, in vain, through the packet for any communications from Montagu or Kate, the others being chiefly from college friends, interspersed with a few Christmas bills. He re-read his mother's epistle more than once, and its contents threw a gloom over all his musings, which, a short time before, had been so bright and cheerful. The rocks

of Sÿenè looked blacker than they had in the early morn, and his hopes and prospects had become overclouded. There was, perhaps, a slight tinge of selfishness mixed up with his regret for Kate, for if Montagu were once more free, it seemed probable that he might marry Elsie, unless she, too, should hear of this dark history !

He landed in the mud village of Aswàn, and sauntered through its bazaar, endeavouring to divert his thoughts, by the sight of the merry Nubian faces. He then walked far along the beach, and took a farewell look of the rocks of Sÿenè. As he returned, he met Fred Morden.

“I say, old fellow, are you coming to dinner? The things are all cold. I have been hunting for you in every direction. The Seymours’ dragoman has persuaded them to remain on board their own boat, and they have actually weighed anchor, and are almost out of

sight by this time. We should have been before them if you had not been out of the way. Come along !”

“ I am very sorry,” returned Frank : “ but I have had bad news, and wanted a walk to put myself into good humour.”

“ Ah ! well ! look here ; come along to dinner first, and then let us hear all about it.”

When they were seated in the porch, and were once more under way, Frank gave his friend a brief outline of what he had heard, after obtaining from him a strict promise of secrecy.

“ I can only say how very sorry I am, but hope it may come all right in the end—I have heard something about it from my sister Em-mie.”

“ Do you mean to say she knows ?”

“ Yes—oh, yes—I suppose everybody does. All I know is, I’m deuced sorry.”

Frank was silent.

"By the way," continued Morden, after a pause: "my sister says she hopes you have remembered her sketches."

This recalled to him the reflections of the last two days and he almost coloured when he recollected his want of allegiance to Emmeline while under the dazzling influence of Elsie's genius.

CHAPTER IV.

AMUNRI.

*" The Lotus, Off El Uksur,
" 15th February, 18—.*

" MY DEAREST MOTHER,

" You will, I trust, have received my epistle, closed at Ermèut and forwarded to Cairo by a boat which was leaving Luxor as we arrived. We hope to find letters from you at Kenéh. I never, in my life, felt more anxious for intelligence from England, more especially of yourself, than now, when more than six weeks have elapsed since we last heard. It makes me feel home-sick to

think of you in the deserted rooms at dear old Dorrington. I wish, with all my heart, that you were with us here, to enjoy the glorious sights which I have seen to-day.

“I scarcely know how to express my sensations upon visiting this plain, once covered, far and wide, by the great metropolis of Amun. You remember my enthusiasm when we caught the first glimpse of Rome, on the road from Civita-Castellana. Besides Rome, I have seen nothing—there can be nothing—in the world, more wonderful than Thebes; and while the yellow Tiber still flowed between desert banks, this plain of Amunei was the seat of a great capital—a world-metropolis—as vast, and peopled, as London. As I sat to-day in the Pylon of Karnak, I traced the very streets and bridges of this amazing city, the populous Noph of the Jewish prophets, stretching in all directions as far as the eye could reach.

“Thebes loses nothing in comparison with Philæ and the rock-temples of Nubia, in fact

all else sinks into insignificance beside this departed capital of Upper Egypt. Perhaps my Nubian researches may have given me a greater insight into Egyptian art, for I confess that I begin to despise anything later than a thousand years before the Christian era ! Dendara will, I fear, have no charms for me now. The Ptolemies were evidently, so to say, revivers of religious architecture, like our ecclesiological friends in England, and the fruit of their labours is as inferior to the old work as the New Houses of Parliament, or even Pugin's Churches, are to Salisbury and York Minsters.

"I think I omitted describing the Kings' tombs in my last Theban epistle. A royal funeral *cortège*, from El Karnak to the valley of sepulchres, must have been the grandest religious ceremony ever conceived. Imagine the gorgeous procession passing along the Dromos of Sphinxes which crossed the whole breadth of the capital, a city interspersed with gardens of palm and mimosa, and then, suddenly quit-

ting the bright scene of earthly pride and splendour, to wind through dark and narrow defiles of yellow lime-rock without a vestige of verdure or a sign of life, unless it were a solitary vulture brooding over the desolation. The contrast is exquisite. To the old Thebans it must have been yet more impressive. The rich plain watered by the Nile was typical of life, while the desert, Typho, was the emblem of death. The rocky glens in the Koornëh mountains are certainly the grandest burying places in the world, well worthy the beautiful monuments they contain.

“Here again is startling contrast: on the one hand the wild, rocky glens recalling the opening scene of Dante’s *Inferno*, on the other the polished chambers of the dead, with their walls painted in Arabesques, as rich in colour and delicate in finish as the rooms in Pompeii, or the *loggie* of the Vatican. The tombs of Thebes reflect the mysterious nature of the old Nile faith better than the temples, in which

the paintings are obliterated and the roofs, for the most part, destroyed. These subterraneous palaces, where the priest-kings of Thebes were buried, are approached by long corridors of which the entrances are concealed among the rocks of the desert, where Typho reigned supreme. What a victory over the power of death to have perforated his domain with the fairest creations of civilized life, and thus, to have brought, as it were, the influence of Osiris, the incarnation of Goodness, to undermine the desolation of Evil! Osiris was a divinity whose counterpart we vainly seek in Greek or Roman mythology. The Greeks were too materialist to understand the spiritual nature of the Egyptian Man-God, whose loveliness and beneficence must have won all hearts, while His sanctity (equalling that which the Jews attributed to Jehovah) made it profanation even to pronounce His name. Like the one, of whom even some Christians have supposed him to be an emblem, he is represented in the

tomb, number three, with outstretched arms, in the form of a crucifixion or transfiguration. When the guides and my companions had retired from that sacred chamber, I felt tempted to return to this primeval symbol of the spirit of nature, and recall the old initiations into that mystic faith of Osiris, which must have been well fitted to satisfy the yearnings of our frail humanity after the world unseen.

“It is astonishing to find oneself contemplating vivid and truthful representations of a civilisation anterior to all our records, older than the Trojan war—painted nearly three thousand five hundred years ago! Here in these tombs are the very costumes and manners of the times, more minute and accurate than the Bayeux tapestry, or any pictures we possess of the middle ages. I saw the Nile-boats of those days—with the men steering and rowing them, all very like the commoner Dahabëhs which we meet constantly upon the river, and *this* painted a thousand

years before the age of Socrates and Alcibiades.

“ There was a glorious view of the plain as we crossed the rocks from the Vale of Tombs, to return to Thebes. My horse was not accustomed to carry a lady and, I felt it backing with me as we ascended the steep mountain side, and was obliged to spring off and scramble up as well as I could, giving my rein to the Arab guide. The rich expanse of Thebes lay beneath my feet in all its desolation ; it is the most beautiful of the three great plains of Egypt, at least I prefer it to those of Memphis and Osiot. What must it have been when the populous city covered it—with its palaces and merchandise, its temples and bazaars, its ships, armies, and priestly processions !

The day was very hot. I never felt anything like the heat as we left the Koorneh mountains, and proceeded to Medinet Haboo to study the life of King Thothmes.

* * * *

"I endeavour in vain to convey my impressions of Thebes. My mind wanders from one beauty to another. I ought to try and picture to you the great hall of El Karnak, with its forest of columns, now open to the sky but, among which the light scarcely penetrated when it was roofed in. We saw it by moonlight, which adds greatly to its religious aspect. I can quite feel how such a place was calculated to inspire devotional thoughts and I could almost, at times, kneel down and worship the gods of Egypt. Dearest mother, do not be shocked at my pantheism !

* * * * *

"I find I shall be able to send this letter by the boat of our friends Mr. Morden and Mr. Elliott. They have been some days at Thebes, and the latter would willingly have remained longer, but his companion is heartily sick of tombs and temples and, at length, by main

force, is dragging him off. I rather like Mr. Elliott. He is not wanting in sense and ability, although no great genius. His Eastern tour will have done him good and given him a taste for studies, of which his previous knowledge was, perhaps, not profound.

"We are extremely anxious to hear more about this sad affair of Miss Elliott's, and whether the fault was on her side, or his. Papa seems rather tired of the Nile and longs to get back to Cairo. I think he will prefer the desert to the monotony of the river, but he sometimes frightens me by talking of returning to England without going to Mount Sinai, Petra and Jerusalem.

"Farewell, dear mamma. With papa's best love, believe me ever, your most affectionate daughter,

"ELSIE SEYMOUR."

"Will you kindly take charge of these letters as far as the Consulate at Cairo?" said

Elsie to Frank, when he called to take leave of her. "I hope we shall meet again."

"Oh! I shall certainly not leave Cairo until you come. I cannot tell you how vexed I am at starting from Luxor before you, but Frederick Morden will not be happy till he gets away. For the last two days he has scarcely left the boat, where he spends the time in smoking narghilis, and deploring his hard fate. He says he wishes himself back in England and repents he ever came. I cannot insist upon his remaining any longer, and so, go I must."

"It is very hard upon you."

"Poor fellow, he is heartily bored with it all!"

"You are going on to Syria, I hope?"

"Ye—es—," he drawled hesitatingly, for he had a secret project of accompanying the Seymours if he could by any means arrange it, and yet he was anxious that the proposal should come from them.

“Then I trust we may meet again.”

There was nothing peculiarly hopeful or encouraging in Elsie's manner towards Frank Elliott, whose aspirations were built upon a very slender foundation, and yet, as he sat upon his Dahabëeh, gazing upon the receding outline of Karnak and the distant mountains of Koorneh, he recalled visions of her graceful form and thought over the various conversations he had had with her, as they sat beneath the ruins of Kom Ombos, explored the excavations at Esneh, or deciphered the inscriptions and basreliefs of Thebes. He seemed to have learned so much from her clever remarks and to have drunk so deeply into her inspirations, that he felt more and more convinced of her superiority to all other women whom he had ever seen.

“I say, Elliott, you seemed rather spooney upon the Cerulian. I thought I should never get you away from her,” was Fred's remark as

he came and puffed the fumes of his latakia by his friend's side.

"What humbug!" exclaimed the other, turning aside to hide his confusion.

"I don't know what to say," returned Frederick, "I quite expect to see her Mrs. Francis Elliott, some of these days. Why, you never left her side! I can't tell what happened in those Queens' tombs, where you scrambled underground together."

Frank was rather sore at his friend's accusations, since he had not sufficiently given up all thoughts of Emmeline, to feel indifferent as to her knowing of his latent admiration for Miss Seymour. He endeavoured to change the conversation, but Morden, once or twice, returned to the charge, and he was rejoiced when bed-time came, and allowed him to dream in unmolested felicity.

They awoke opposite Kenèh, and found letters from home. Frank received one from his sister, which ran thus : —

“MY DEAREST FRANK,

“You will perhaps have heard from mamma, before my letter reaches you, of this most unfortunate event which has occurred. I dare not trust myself to write you all I feel about it. I do not blame any one and hope to be enabled, in time, to see that it has all happened for the best. Do not suppose, however, that I am good or submissive enough, to resign myself willingly to my terrible fate. I loved him in a way in which I never can love another, far too well to believe that he deserves any blame. But I will not trust myself farther. I only wish you had been in England, and perhaps this might have been averted.”

* * * * *

The remainder of Kate's letter was almost entirely occupied with other matters, excepting towards the conclusion, when she again adverted to the one absorbing topic.

No events of startling interest occurred

during the ten or twelve days between Kenéh and Boulak, when, towards the end of February, Elliott and Morden found themselves re-instated in a comfortable hotel, upon the Ezbekeeÿah, at Cairo.

It is not our purpose to describe the beauties of the Eastern city or its neighbourhood. Suffice it to say that the two companions contrived to amuse themselves in and around the Egyptian capital, visiting the pyramids and lionizing the mosques and tombs, until the arrival of Mr. Seymour and Elsie, when they arranged to start the same day, but with a separate caravan, for Mount Sina and El Akaba.

CHAPTER V.

THE DESERT.

A CROWD had assembled on the Ezbekeeyah, at Cairo, to see the English travellers mount their dromedaries and set forth upon their six weeks' journey through the desert of Mount Sinai.

The baggage camels had preceded them by three hours, in order that, at the end of their first day's progress, they might have the comfort of finding the tents pitched, if not the dinner cooked, when they reached their halting place.

All the idlers from Shepherd's and the Orient, the two principal hotels, were eagerly watching the beautiful English girl, clad in a

costume to protect her from the sun, seated upon her dromedary, like some Eastern queen, and about to face the fatigues of a long and arduous pilgrimage. Those with whom she had formed a slight acquaintance at the *table d'hôte* addressed her, and she laughed merrily while the three gentlemen were making their first essay at camel mounting. The least successful was her father, who was nearly pitched forward over the animal's head, as he had not provided against the second jerk, which the beast makes in raising itself. The costume of the travellers was quite as laughable as their initiation into their new mode of riding. Frank had orientalized himself in some degree, for he had covered his tarboosh with one of the brown and yellow kerchiefs which form the usual head-gear of the bedawin, while the remainder of his dress consisted of a shooting jacket, and a red scarf round the waist of his *pantalons à l'anglaise*. Morden, on the other hand, would not give up a broad-brimmed

wide-a-wake, covered with white linen, which had served him up the Nile, and he combined it with an Arab goat-hair tunic, covering his person. Mr. Seymour disdained all orientalizations, and appeared very un-Arab-like indeed, stuck upon a dromedary, in a calico-covered hat and shooting coat; looking the picture of misery and despair, when he made the discovery that he must content himself with a single halter instead of a bridle.

Accompanied by their Sheikhs and one of their dragomans (the other having gone forward in charge of the baggage), they commenced their progress through the narrow streets of Cairo, to the Bab el Nusr, whence, by the tombs of the Khalifs, they emerged into the desert of Suez.

The first day's journey was not enlivened by much conversation, as they all felt too much jolted to attempt it; all, at least, excepting Elsie, who seemed by far the most at home upon the new kind of *monture*.

Towards five o'clock, they came in sight of four tents pitched upon the sand, with a group of camels wandering near, and a party of Arabs gathered round a fire, upon which a boy was heaping fuel.

"Hurrah!" cried Morden. "Achmet says that those are our tents—how jolly!"

"Are you tired of your dromedary?" enquired Elsie.

"Tired!" rejoined her father, as if he supposed her question had been addressed to himself, and uttering a desponding groan. "I have never been any thing else since I first started on the brute. I say, Achmet, this is a very rough animal."

"Now, sir, what a bity you no dry him before you start. Braps the Sheikh find you another. Certainly you get other beast at El Akaba."

"At Akaba? Yes! That's some three weeks hence."

"No, ma, only fifteen days ride from here, if you no count the time at Mount Sinai."

"Only fifteen days' jolting to pieces! I shall be dead in fifteen days."

"Papa, you shall ride mine to-morrow," said Elsie, "mine is very easy, and I do not care the least for the jolting."

"Oh, no! Mr. Seymour shall have mine," rejoined Frank, who felt ashamed at not having made the offer sooner.

"Or mine, if he likes," put in Morden, "but mine has not quite the paces of a park hack either. He goes a little carty, too, Achmet. I should say the Sheikh, there, has got the best blood. Ask him whether he'll give it up? Pitch into him a bit, and tell him what a rascal he is for mounting us so badly."

Achmet pitched into the Sheikh, as Morden suggested, and the result was that, after a long dispute, in Arabic, the dragoman told Mr. Seymour that he was to have a "berry good gammel," on the morrow.

Carpets were spread upon the ground, and Elsie sat, with her sketch-book in hand, watching the Arabs roasting coffee over the fire, while the cooks were preparing the dinners for their respective masters.

Mr. Seymour had wisely determined to keep all his travelling arrangements as distinct as possible from the other party, in order that his daughter might not be inconvenienced by their travelling together, and that it should be in their power to separate at any moment when desirable. It was a bold step for a young lady to undertake this journey with no one but her father, and, had she been any other than Elsie Seymour, the world might have been shocked ; but, inasmuch as Elsie did not care a straw for the world's opinion upon these points, the world, perhaps, thought it wiser to appear equally indifferent.

Fred Morden consoled himself for his rough ride with the pleasant fumes of the chibouque, as he lay stretched upon a Persian carpet,

before his tent. Frank, more industrious, attempted a drawing of the Arabs and the camels. Poor Mr. Seymour, after standing for a time by his daughter, was too tired to resist a nap, so he went into his tent and threw himself upon his bed.

Elsie longed to set off and explore. Their halting place was in a complete plain of sand, varied only by a low ridge of mountains, to the south, which, according to a map she had been studying, seemed to indicate the direction of the valley of the Wanderings, by which the children of Israel had made their escape to the Red Sea. The spot which the Sheikh had chosen for their night's encampment was a hollow, and afforded but little prospect of the distant desert, so that, in order to obtain a more complete survey of the country, she felt it would be necessary to ascend to some higher ground. She knew that it would not do for her to wander alone, and feeling vexed at her want of independence, sighed to be a man.

Frank, who, while engaged in drawing, had not failed, from time to time, to raise his eyes towards the object of his aspirations, seeing her alone, at length ventured to approach.

“Do you mind walking with me, Mr. Elliott, as far as that high ground? I want to trace the range of hills marked in this map.”

Elliott was, of course, overjoyed and flattered at being thus useful, and never did he feel happier than in that pure exhilarating desert air, with Elsie at his side.

“You have not told me whether you received good accounts from England, before you left Cairo?” she enquired, in a kind and sympathising tone.

“I don’t know, returned Elliott, “whether you have heard that my sister’s marriage is not going to take place?”

“I heard something about it,” replied Elsie, “but no particulars. I am very sorry for it. I trust that things are not so bad as you fancy,

and that there may still be a chance of its being all arranged."

"I am afraid not," rejoined Frank, who felt he had been allured into disclosing more than he intended, and was doubtful as to whether he had not said too much.

"But, pray tell me," continued Miss Seymour, perseveringly, and, in the same warm tone of interest which went to Frank's heart, "was it broken off while your sister was ill?"

"Yes! and, I fear, much against her own feelings, although she does not betray this to my mother."

"What! then they broke it off, for her? It is a pity you were not in England. I am sure there must be some misapprehensions. Mr. Montagu is not capable of anything dishonourable."

"I fancy they must have acted indiscreetly. A German governess of my uncle's seems to have set the stories afloat."

"Believe me, Mr. Elliott, if you act firmly and with discretion, you will be able to set everything to rights—I feel certain of it."

"It is quite broken off. I am afraid it is too late!"

"No, it is never too late!" returned Elsie, warmly.

There was a pause, during which Frank was wondering at what he had just heard from the lips of one whom he had sometimes supposed to be his sister's rival. He had even fancied, at times, lately, that the termination of the engagement between Montagu and his sister, might, by setting the former at liberty, renew the hopes which people had attributed to Elsie. Her whole manner and conduct, however, upon this occasion, prevented any such conclusions, and by so doing, gave fresh encouragement to Frank.

"Well!" he continued, after a pause, "I was balancing whether to return to England, and was only decided by a letter from Kate,

urging me not to spoil my tour. There were, perhaps, other reasons why I ought not to have yielded to her persuasions. I am grieved to say that my elder brother has been seriously ill in India, and that he is gone home by the Cape, the doctors having recommended the voyage. He will arrive before I get there."

Had the truth been known, Frank's decision was, probably, less to be attributed to Kate's letter than to Elsie's eyes.

"Is your brother in the civil service?"

"Yes, and has got on remarkably well."

"This will be a fresh anxiety for poor Lady Elliott and your sister. Pray remember me very kindly to them when you next write."

* * * * *

After a pause, she changed the conversation. They had walked some distance from their little camp, of which they soon lost sight among the undulations of the ground.

The crisp sand and shingle of the desert of

Suez bear the appearance of having, even recently, been washed by the waves of the sea. They had reached an elevation, which enabled them to gain a better view of the mountains, and to speculate upon the journey of the children of Israel.

“Very few of the mediæval pilgrims made so complete an inspection of the Bible topography, as we, who begin by the land of Egypt and then follow the track of the Israëlites through the Wilderness to the promised land,” remarked Elsie.

“And yet,” rejoined Frank, “it is certainly the way to obtain the most complete insight into the sacred narrative.”

“I confess,” said Elsie, “that, much as I sympathise with the pilgrim-spirit of dwelling on associations, I feel a loss of interest in passing from the antiquities of Egypt to the desert.”

“And, nevertheless,” returned Frank, “we

have more sympathy with the Isræelites through association, than with the Egyptians."

"Everything in Egypt, or rather everything really good, such as Bennee-Hassan, the pyramids, etcetera., are so far anterior to Isræelitish history!" remarked Elsie, who, perceiving a look of surprise upon Elliott's face, continued: "You do not understand me, perhaps. I am not intending to disparage the Jewish sacred record, but simply to express what I feel at leaving something very venerable—for the Nile valley seems to contain the oldest monuments in the world—and coming to peruse a story of yesterday."

Frank felt slightly shocked at times by the boldness of Elsie's speculations upon subjects which his education had taught him to regard as sacred. He once or twice ventured to argue with her upon questions of biblical chronology, but ended by being half-persuaded she was right. She was too large-minded to sneer at

legends or traditions, and was content to find poetry in what many travellers deride as monkish inventions. The beautiful anecdote of Heliopolis represents the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, when they fled with our Lord into Egypt, as halting near a well at the outskirts of the Great Temple of the Sun at On, where the water was changed from bitter to sweet, in order to afford refreshment to that true Light of the world, before whom Re, the Sun-God of Egypt, was so soon to be extinguished. To Elsie such legends appeared like the flowers of a popular faith and she accepted them, as adding fresh poetry to associations already possessing such deep interest. Her mind was not one to cavil at the details of a system which she could not entirely accept. Such minds generally end by taking Pantheism as a whole, or else by conforming implicitly to the teaching of the church. At present there was some degree of uncertainty in her views. Her heart longed

for faith, but her reason taught her to distrust its objects.

After feasting their eyes upon a glorious sunset, such as is only to be seen in the desert, they returned to their tents, where Miss Seymour found her father impatient for his dinner, and left Frank to retire to his own no less hungry companion.

The ten days that followed were some of the most delightful which Elsie had ever known. Her father had gradually become more reconciled to the life of the desert, and she began to feel that wild scene to be, to herself as to the Israelites of old, an escape from the bondage of Egypt, or, at least, in her case, from the thralldom of the Nile boat.

Three days more brought them to Suez, where they crossed the end of the gulf in a boat, the camels meeting them at Eyn Moussa, the wells of Moses. It was a lovely evening when they embarked upon the blue waves of

the Red Sea. The transparency of the waters enabled Elsie to see the coral branches spreading far and wide beneath them. The sun was setting and the mountains of the Arabian coast became tinged with a gorgeous hue of pink and lilac, until the moon rose from behind them in all the golden radiance of the south, and reflected her rays in the smooth waters near the shore which they were approaching.

Frank was in ecstasies, and considerably endeavoured to communicate his feelings to Elsie, who needed no such recommendation of the scene to induce her to appreciate it.

During the days which followed she often felt that Frank and his companion were *de trop*, and longed to be alone, or with some more sympathising spirits, in this pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. It is true that Frank could draw, appreciate scenery, and even talk about historical associations, but there was a something wanting which made his society dis-

tasteful to her in her present mood. For instance, when, on the second day after their landing in Arabia Petræa, they lunched at Howara—the bitter waters of Marah—shaded by the two dwarf palms, she felt that Elliott drew the trees and mountains without seeming to feel the history of the Prophet of Israël. To her it may have been only like poetry, but, as such, she longed to dwell upon it, and envied the old Baron de Géramb's pilgrimage through these scenes during a Lenten season spent in tracing God's dealings with his people. That same evening they encamped at the wells of Elim, where a cluster of palms flourish around the springs, and Elsie stole away to muse upon the recollections of the place. She took her drawing-book and pursued her way towards the wells, where she sat down to sketch the deep indented sand-rocks. The grotesque shapes of the surrounding hills were fit subjects for the pencil and, when the rays of the setting sun had

tinged the whole valley with a rosëate glow, she longed for colours to transfer the magical effect upon her paper.

As it grew darker she felt the charm of loneliness in the desert. Here and there a solitary camel, straying from the encampment, was feeding upon the prickly herbage of the wilderness, or a vulture might be seen pursuing its flight across the valley. There was a solemnity in the wild Wady Ozaïta, for such is its modern name, which filled her with sensations even deeper than those which she had experienced in the moonlit hall of El Karnak.

“The Hebrew Prophet,” she thought, “did well to withdraw his neophytes into these glorious Wadies of the Arabian Desert to instruct them in the worship of the God, who dwells not in temples made with hands. The religion of the Nile-vale was necessarily dependent upon architectural constructions for its solemnities, and the fanes of Amunra, Kneph, Phtha and its whole cycle of deïfied attri-

butes were far more magnificent than any with which Moses could hope to entice to the truth those accustomed to this worship. He did well, therefore, to erect his tabernacle in scenes of creation more sublime than any works which man's art can achieve, constantly to recall to their minds the omnipotent ruler of the universe.

Such was Elsie's notion, for she had never attempted to reconcile the complete self-sacrifice of the inspired lawgiver with the system of jugglery and imposition which such a theory as hers must attribute to him. Nevertheless, she had taught herself to venerate him with a degree of hero-worship far exceeding the cold admiration of many who would argue for his miraculous powers. She pictured to herself the camp of Israël extending through the Wady, and Moses, like an Arab Sheikh, standing by the wells to preserve order among the obedient throng. She not only imagined the scene, but believed that some three thousand

five hundred years ago, it had actually occurred upon that very ground.

There had been so few opportunities for complete solitude since she had left Cairo that now, finding herself alone, she seemed to revel in the sensations which her position inspired, and, beneath one of the stunted palms overhanging the now brackish wells, she besought the great God of Israël, to comfort her with His love and to guide her into His truth.

It was late and she was preparing to arise when her eye was attracted by a shining substance upon the ground. She took it up, and found it to be a broken chain, which had probably been attached to a watch, to which was suspended a simple cross of agate. Was this the answer to her prayer?

She heard her father's voice, and presently met him with Frederick Morden.

"We have been searching for you in all directions," said her father.

"I thought you were up those cliffs," added

Morden : " Elliott is gone off to the top of them in hopes of finding you. Our cook always gets the dinner ready before yours, and is terribly put out when we are not there to eat it. To say the truth, I was half afraid, Miss Seymour, that you were devoured by a baba. I saw some footsteps of hyenas as we came along."

" I wonder you did not bring your rifle to protect me !"

" I was very nearly going out with it, to shoot hares and desert partridges, of which I saw a brace."

" You must find the desert very dull !" said Elsie, who felt how entirely destitute he was of any sympathies of association.

" Well, it is rather slow, but I like it better than the Nile after all. We do get exercise here, at all events, but there is much less shooting and that kind of thing, than Deira led me to expect."

Elsie could scarcely help smiling as she replied—

"I should suppose you would not think of coming here again on purpose to shoot?"

"Not I! I have scarcely seen a thing till to-day," returned poor Morden, who did not perceive her satire.

"To be sure," rejoined Elsie, "this is not the time of year for the moors in Scotland, but I should think you would have enjoyed a winter on the coast of Albania much better?"

"Yes, I hear that well spoken of, Fielding and another man I knew, went there in a yacht and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Oh! there is no doubt this is very slow work!"

"And yet I suppose you knew there was no game here?"

"No, I don't suppose I'd thought much about it, till I asked Deira."

"You must remember about the quails in the Bible?"

"Ah! Well there are no quails now! I thought we might, at least, find some of them."

Elsie gave it up as a hopeless task. If she

had catechised a village schoolboy she could not have obtained less response, so she suggested that, as they were approaching the tents, he had better go in search of his companion while she returned with her father.

During the morrow's travel, as she sat upon her dromedary, threading the wild, circuitous glens which conduct to the wilderness of Sin, her thoughts reverted to the little cross which she had found in answer to her prayer, and she took it out to gaze upon it. She did not appreciate, in its fullness, the mystery of Wady Morkha, with its boundary of variegated mountains and its lilac distance, enshrining the faint outline of Gebel Serbal. It was in this vale that the manna was first showered down to feed the people of Israël, and she had not learnt of that hidden manna upon which the saints of God are feeding day by day !

On entering Wady Morkha, Elliott and Mor-den remained behind to bathe in the Red Sea, so that Elsie and her father reached the camp-

ing-place alone and took a stroll to Eyn Morkha, a well beneath a rock, overshadowed by a single palm. This wilderness of Sin, with its miraculous supplies of manna and quails, must have appeared like an oasis in Israel's journey towards Horeb. So thought Elsie as she sat and delineated the beautiful outline of Gebel Serbal, with a foreground of exquisite variety.

"I almost wish, dear papa, we had been alone and not attached ourselves to the other party," remarked Elsie to her father.

"Well, darling, you know I asked you before we started. But there is no reason we should not separate upon reaching Mount Sinai."

"Oh! no—that would never do. Besides we heard, you may remember, that we ought to be a large party to go through Sheikh Hossayn's country to Petra. I did not mean to find any fault with our arrangements, which were for the best, but simply to express my preference for being all alone with you, dearest father."

"Dear child!" exclaimed Mr. Seymour, and continued: "I rather like Mr. Elliott. He seems clever and sensible, I think."

"But very insipid, papa! He is certainly better than his companion. But it scarcely shows much discrimination to have chosen such a fellow-traveller for these lands of poetry. Don't you think him rather disappointing upon acquaintance?"

"Well, I have hardly conversed enough to perceive it, but he appears to be well-informed and shrewd. I almost think you are hard upon him."

"Perhaps I am; but you know how difficult I am to please."

Mr. Seymour thought of Cecil Montagu, and sighed.

"See, papa!" exclaimed Elsie: "here is Taimay, coming with our camels to water them."

"Well, I declare! there is that fellow, Morden, shooting," rejoined her father, who heard

the report of a gun in the distance, and saw Morden in the same direction.

Frank enjoyed the desert life as much as Elsie, and she was mistaken in supposing that he did not feel its associations. It is true that his mind was of a totally different cast from her own and that he often said least upon subjects which he felt most deeply. He did not, perhaps, strain after recollections as she did, and felt them rather as a whole than in detail. Had his travels been through an American prairie, he would have experienced less general interest than in wandering through the wilderness of Mount Sinai, for he certainly did acknowledge the charm of treading upon ground hallowed by the deeds of remote ages and by the most glorious aspirations of humanity.

Of late Frank had felt himself rather repelled by Elsie's manner. Her amiability at the commencement of the journey had led him to pre-

sume upon gaining her friendship, or even her affections. It may be that he had checked her by his advances, and it appeared but too certain to him that she had grown colder and more reserved. For this reason, during the last two days, he had purposely thrown himself less in her way, and had resolved, half in pique, to keep more aloof for the future. Behind these resolves there lingered a secret hope of their being accidentally thrown together and a possible discovery that, after all, her apparent chill might only be a momentary caprice, or an accidental humour.

Upon leaving the wide expanse of Wady Morkha, they entered the defiles of the wild rock-mountains by which it was girt, and, losing sight of the Red Sea, travelled inland, towards Horeb, the mount of God.

Grander and more grand became the scene at each step, as they wound among rocks of every tint and hue, from black basalt to pink

and yellow sand-stone. In Wady Mokuttub are most of those Sinaïtic inscriptions, by some attributed to the children of Israel in their wanderings. Towering above the other mountains, in this stupendous scene of desolation, is the beautiful Gebel Serbal, which they had perceived upon the previous day. A bluish tinge invested its summit and seemed, like a halo, to distinguish it from the many-coloured hills at its base.

Another day brought them into the Wady Feiràn, a ravine more lonely than anything which Elsie had ever seen, of which the sides are formed of almost perpendicular rocks of red granite, while its bed is irrigated by a rivulet, shaded by groves of palm and mimosa. The graceful peaks of the rocky mountains form the termination of every vista and, by their varied colours and singular forms, afford a constant diversion to the eye. This oâsis of fertility and cultivation, with its fields of grass, palm groves, and human habitations, is the more

striking as it occurs suddenly, amidst a howling wilderness of so many days' continued travel.

"De Sheikh want to dreat you in his dent. He lib near here, and hope you will come dine wid him and his wives."

Such was Achmet's speech to Miss Seymour and her father, as the party were issuing from Wady Feiran.

"Oh! what a bore!" grumbled Mr. Seymour.

"I should so like it!" said Elsie: "papa, do you much mind it, for once? We shall never have such another opportunity of seeing the Arabs in their tents."

"As you like, darling; but I should think you'll find it very dirty. Does he live in a tent, or where?" he continued, addressing the dragoman.

"Oh, yes! in a dent. Berry many dents with all his wives, you know!"

"What a joke!" exclaimed Morden, who

had just ridden up on his dromedary and heard the concluding words. "Deira wants us to dine with your Shiekh. We are to pay lots of baksheesh for it, of course. I hope you will come, Miss Seymour, it will be a capital spree, I expect."

"Ah!" said the dragoman; "but Miss Seymour no dine in de gentleman's dent—she dine wid his missis and de bint, dey call dem : de young ladies, you know."

"Oh law!" rejoined Morden. "Won't they let us all dine with the ladies? It will be slow work in the gentleman's tent, as you call it. Who are the gentlemen besides ourselves, pray?"

"Oh! great many—De Sheikh, and his fader, and all his broders, and dese beople you see. And they kill a sheep or a goat, braps, and you eat him, after de bint and de wifes dress him all manner of ways."

"I suppose I shall have to superintend the dressing, then," suggested Elsie: "if this part

of the business has to be transacted in the ladies' tent."

"Well, I hope then you'll send us in something eatable."

"I won't promise it. Tell me, Achmet, why our Sheikh has decked himself out so splendidly in that silk dress? He looks as if he had come fresh out of the Cairo bazaar."

"It be for his wife. He be so berry glad to get home. He neber wear dat fine dress in Cairo or anywhere, but for his own wife. When he go to Cairo he walk in berry poor dress, as you see, but now he come home he wear fine dress to show how glad he be to see her, and all his bint and little ones at home."

Elsie was touched with the simplicity which dictated such a custom, and with the monotonous chaunt of joy which he had been intoning to himself, as he advanced along, at the head of the party. That same night, in the retirement of her tent, she wrote some lines in her journal-book, of which, notwith-

standing their hasty and careless composition,
we venture to give a transcript:—

SHEIKH OMBAHREKH.

Oh ! wherefore now that blithesome song ?
Ombahrehk, why so gay ?
So full of mirth—why ride along.
As on a bridal day ?

Anon thou wert in Cairo's town,
'Mid many a bright bazaar,
Where Persian robes were hanging down,
And jewels from Senaar !

Yet in that city thou wast ne'er
In silken garments seen,
Thy bed'wi robe, of wild goat hair,
Was all thy pomp, I ween !

Nay ! who in Masr's streets should care
To hear thy desert song ?
Or who discern thy chieftain's air
Amid that stranger throng ?

They knew thee as a bed'wi wild
In that coarse jellabeer,
For *there* thou wast the desert child,
But art a chieftain here !

Oh ! care not for the scorn of pride
In gorgeous Masr's mart,
For all are strangers by thy side,
And strangers to thy heart !

But now thy journey's toil is past,
And thou art near thy home.
To see thy darling wife at last,
The happy day is come.

The tears that glisten in thine eye,
The look upon thy brow,
Are signs of joy that never lie,
More true than words, I trow !

Ombahrehk, chaunt thy bridal lay,
It is an hour for mirth !
Come wear thy Broussa robe to-day,
To greet thy native earth.

It is for her that gorgeous state !
For, who, in Cairo's throng
Could prize it as the loving mate
Who hears thy lover's song ?

Oh ! wife ! in all yon rich bazaar
There was no heart like thine !
What cared they for my chaunt afar,
To thee a song divine ?

Ombahrehk, thou hast done aright,
There is no love like this !
So keep thy Broussa garments bright
To greet thy homely bliss.

They shortly entered the ravine in which Sheikh Ombahrehk's tents were pitched. There were no less than eleven of these habitations placed in a row. The material of which they were made was black goats-hair, but, instead of the ordinary conical shape, they were flat-headed and square in form. The dragoman prepared Elsie and her companions for a strange exhibition, in which they were

to take part, and which precluded their paying much attention to anything besides. They were to ride their camels in single file in rear of the Sheikh, and, in this form, to march up and down before the eleven tents. While they went through this strange evolution, the women within made a noise with their tongues which resembled the sound of a watchman's rattle. This was the customary greeting to the Sheikh upon his return after a long absence.

A long time elapsed during the preparation of the feast, of which they were doomed to partake, and Elsie, suggesting a walk, they inspected the flocks of sheep and goats around the tents, and saw one of these unfortunate animals captured for their meal.

In the meanwhile, their baggage-camels, which had remained in the rear, had arrived, and their tents were pitched in the vicinity of Sheikh Ombahrehk's encampment. Mr. Seymour was anxious, if possible, to avoid the

horrors of the gipsy feast, as he called it, but found Elsie determined not to miss so good an opportunity of witnessing their domestic arrangements. She entered the tent of the Sheikh's wife, where a large number of women were collected, who, after a polite greeting, began to examine her clothes and ornaments. Mr. Seymour was not allowed to follow his daughter; but, for Elsie's satisfaction, the dragoman so contrived, as to be able, without intruding into the hareem, to interpret from behind a curtain suspended before the door.

The interior of the tent was hung with sheep-skins, and a species of *dewân* was formed of these and camel-hair cloaks, whereon they were seated. They unveiled in her presence, and she could trace a certain amount of beauty in their black sparkling eyes and swarthy features. Their blue dress was of the coarsest texture, and not remarkable for cleanliness. She amused them by exhibiting her watch and chain, and they looked with great delight upon

her rings, and exclaimed that they were beautiful.

Elsie made an essay of her arabic, and found that she could proceed without the dragoman, who, not being wanted, went to help the Hawàgees with their feast.

“ You come from a long, long way off ? ”

“ Very far,” replied Elsie.

“ Beyond Mas’r ? ”

“ Far beyond ! ”

“ Mas’r is very beautiful, is it not ? ”

“ Beautiful.”

“ Many English Hawàgees come here.”

“ Have there been many of late ? ”

“ Many, many.”

“ Did they come here to see you ? ”

“ No—but travellers were in this Wady before yesterday.”

“ English Hawàgees ? ”

“ Yes, gone to the convent of Mount Sinai.”

“ English ladies—women ? ”

“ No, no—Hawàgees, one, two.”

After more conversation of the kind, the dinner, at length, made its appearance, having been preceded by coffee, roasted and pounded in Elsie's presence. The repast consisted of four dishes, all derived from the sheep which had been killed, and really not deserving of even Mr. Bateson's censure. Elsie was forced to eat with her fingers, and, being pressed to take more than was agreeable, found it hard to invent excuses which would satisfy her hostesses. At length, she succeeded in communicating with her father, and, after a tender farewell of the Arabs, made her escape to her own tent, where she sat down to write her daily notice of the various wonders she had seen.

Elliott and Morden remained later with their hosts, who were much pleased with the latter, whose merry face and hearty laugh won their cordial sympathy.

CHAPTER VI.

MOUNT SINAI.

ON the morrow at an early hour they came in sight of Gebel Moossa. At every turn of the desolate Wadies, the shattered rocks of granite recalled the scene which greeted the prophet Elijah, when he made his forty days' pilgrimage to the mount of God.

The grandeur of the scene so entirely absorbed Elsie, that she shrank from conversation, and endeavoured to picture Israel in Rephidim, and Moses ascending the granite mount. When the sun illumines the rocks of Horeb or St. Katharine, it imparts to them an effect of burnished copper, so shining is the material of which they are composed. Al-

though her spirit had not penetrated the mystery of the stern mountain of the Law, and had still less, sought, beyond its shadow, for the well-spring of divine grace, yet she felt an indescribable interest in beholding that mighty pile of primary formation, whence the religion of one half of the human race took its rise. The Mohammedans, as well as the Jews and Christians, acknowledge the revelation of mount Sinai, and it has thus been calculated that, at least five hundred millions of our species bow down to its divine inspirations.

It was a full hour before sun-set when they approached the huge square pile of building, looking like a fortified town, in a cleft of mount Horeb, known by the name of the convent of St. Katharine. Ere long, they found themselves beneath its lofty walls of stone and, having descended from the dromedaries, were, one after another, seated in the slip-knot of a rope and hoisted up through a trap-door of the building. In the same manner their baggage

was hauled after them, and Elsie found herself within the walls of an Eastern monastery.

The strangers' rooms are a series of cells, opening on to a gallery overlooking one of the principal courts of the convent, and the rule, or custom, of mount Sinai, is sufficiently lenient to allow of ladies sharing in the hospitalities of the place, provided they refrain from intruding into certain portions of the building. Elsie was delighted with her cell, overlooking the garden of the convent, of which the cypresses and olives formed a pleasing foreground to the stupendous desolation beyond. She could not help contrasting the grand prospect with that sombre street in which she had placed her London sisterhood, and almost wishing she could transport her infant establishment to this glorious scene, and spend the remainder of her days in the calm contemplation and holy prayer, which the rocks of mount Sinai must inspire.

Her father had lain down to sleep before

dinner, as he was overcome with the fatigues of the journey, and she was left to meditate in silence.

In looking upon that stern wild scene, the last few months arose before her, and she recalled Cecil Montagu and the impression which she had unwittingly suffered him to make upon her heart. She longed to find one, as accomplished as he, to understand her. Her fancy's aspirations seemed without response, for although she had occasionally known the luxury of sympathy upon a variety of subjects, she had scarcely ever met one whose whole heart beat in unison with hers.

The sun was setting behind the red peaks of the desert, and she knelt upon the divan at her open casement, and adored the God of that exquisite nature, the lord God of Sinai. She looked down into the garden beneath her, and saw a figure watching the same sunset. 'It was a man in a European dress, but neither Elliott nor Morden, and she concluded him to

be one of the strangers staying in the convent. After standing for a time in contemplation, he turned and approached the monastery. At that moment she fancied that his general appearance was not unknown to her, but it was too dark to distinguish his features.

Elsie found her father so much overcome with his journey that she induced him to go to bed, and she herself soon retired for the night, impatient to arise early and see the wonders of the mount of God.

At three in the morning she was awoke by a dull sound like that of a hammer beating against a board, and presently she heard footsteps passing her door, and English voices in the corridor.

The sound was the Greek church bell calling the monks to the nocturnal office, and the voices were those of two Englishmen, who had arisen either from curiosity or devotion, to be present at the Eastern service. So she learnt from one of the monks in the morning, when she found her

father sufficiently recovered to partake of an early meal and accompany her up mount Sinai.

A monk, in his black head gear, and some Arab boys acted as their ciceroni, and pointed out the wonders of Gebel Moossa. The steep ascent presently enabled them to overlook the convent, of which the walls are as old as the days of the Emperor Justinian, who is also said to have built the church. The monastery stands upon that platform of mount Horeb, where tradition describes Moses as having beheld the burning bush while tending the flocks of Jethro, and one of the chapels covers the sacred site of that event. Sinai is a peak of Mount Horeb, of which St. Epistema forms a second cliff.

The Greek monk, who spoke a little French and Italian, told Mr. Seymour that there was another party of Englishmen a short distance a-head of them. Having made Mr. Seymour's head-ache their excuse for avoiding Morden and Elliott, they dreaded overtaking them.

However, there was no such cause for fear, for upon passing a stone doorway half way up the mountain—a doorway marked with a cross and enclosing the more sacred precincts—they came suddenly upon two strangers with their guide, whose faces were turned backwards towards the arch, to gaze upon the exquisite birds-eye view to which it forms a frame.

“Papa ! It is Mr. Lisle !”

“How do you do, Miss Seymour ? Who could have thought to meet in such a scene ?”

Elsie had extended her hand cordially, for she could not disguise her pleasure at meeting an old friend, at such a time. Mr. Seymour was no less warm in his greeting.

“My uncle, Mr. Winslow !” said Herbert, introducing an oldish-looking man, with a refined and pleasing expression of countenance.

Various enquiries took place on either side, and, for a moment, the great thought of mount Sinai seemed to have been forgotten, in the agreeable discourse of the hour, but Herbert

recalled Elsie to the glorious scenes around them.

After entering beneath a second archway, similar to the first, they passed the chapel to the blessed Virgin and the infant Saviour.

"How strange!" exclaimed Elsie, "to place such a chapel as this upon the stern mountain of the law!"

"There is a legend," returned Herbert, who had ascended the mountain on the previous day, "that our blessed Lord's parents brought Him here during their flight into Egypt, and that the Babe of Bethlehem rested in this cave. I see you smile incredulously, but grant at all events that, *se non e verò e ben trovato*. To me, at least, it is most comforting, in this region of legal ordinances, to be able to dwell, for a moment, upon the reign of Grace and Truth, and to recall, amid these shattered mountains, seethed by the fire of God—this very wreck of primeval nature the stern Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage—to

recall, I say, the meek and lowly Babe—the Saviour of the world, Who has redeemed us from the granite code of Moses.”

“Well, I confess,” replied Elsie, who, if she did not quite agree in all he said, was delighted to have found, at length, a heart more sympathetic than those of her late companions: “that, whatever faith one may attach to the legend, your explanation of it is most satisfactory. But do not think I was smiling at the legend, for I am not an iconoclast, where the icon is beautiful.”

“Where it is beautiful !” repeated Herbert, in a low voice, which could only be heard by Elsie, as they were some paces ahead of Mr. Seymour and Arthur Winslow, “ha ! Miss Seymour—but, where it is marred and without form or comeliness, where, in short, it is the icon of the cross, what say you then ?”

There are moments, in the lives of most persons, when a single sentence causes a thrill,

such as whole volumes might be unable to produce.

Elsie glanced at the earnest face of him who was addressing her and did not reply.

They had reached a plateau, or hollow, between the two peaks of Mount Sinai, in the midst of which is a well, known by the name of "Elijah's Fountain," and by its side grows a single cypress, of considerable height. At a short distance above the spring, is the chapel, enclosing the cave, in which Elijah lodged when the word of the Lord came to him and said:—" *What doest thou here, Elijah?*"

"Acknowledge the grandeur of this scene, Miss Seymour," said Herbert, pointing towards mount St. Katharine, "the words of scripture so exactly describe it."

"I wish I had a Bible here, to read them," answered Elsie.

"I have one, and, if you allow me, will read you the passage. The Lord said to Elijah, who was in the cave—' *Go forth and*

stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind ; and after the wind an earthquake ; but the Lord was not in the earthquake ; and after the earthquake a fire ; but the Lord was not in the fire ; and after the fire a still small voice.' "

"What a marvellously beautiful description of those shattered rocks in front of us !" exclaimed Elsie : "was ever poetry more sublime ? Imagine the Prophet of Israel wrapped in his mantle at the entrance of this cave, consulting the Oracles of God !"

"It does not appear, from the context, that Elijah actually came forth from the grotto, until after this terrible storm had passed ; and then, when the still small voice of his Lord addressed him, he came out, with his face wrapped in his mantle, and stood in the entrance of the cave."

“It is certainly a most complete picture.”

* * * *

The ascent from Elijah's cave to the summit, is very steep, but Elsie refused all assistance, and was the first of the party to accomplish it. It was here that Moses was forty days and forty nights in close communion with God.

“To be all alone with God, upon that wild mountain, would, indeed,” thought Elsie, “be the height of blessedness !”

She would, at that moment, have preferred it even to the society of Lisle, for her heart was very full.

Upon the pinnacle of Sinai are two rude buildings, well suited to the stern aspect of the place, the one a Mohammedan mosque, the other a Christian chapel, thus showing the concord of so many hundred millions in the truth of the Sinaitic revelation. Nothing can be more simple or appropriate than the chapel,

with its rude stone altar, and its ruder stones on which to kneel.

But the prospect at their feet was the climax of grandeur. On one side mount St. Katharine, fifteen hundred feet higher than Sinai; and all around needles of granite, rising in succession, one tier beyond another, as far as the gulfs of Akaba and Suez, of which, on either side, they could discern the blue waters.

Elsie stood in silent contemplation of this greatest of earthly scenes. Herbert did not care to interrupt her at such a moment, and, indeed, he himself was equally absorbed in the glorious vision.

In the meantime, Arthur Winslow seemed to have disappeared, and to have left Mr. Seymour to the mercies of a talkative Greek monk, who was pointing out the valleys of the Isræelitish camp, and the exact sites of each sacred transaction.

“I should like to go into the chapel,” said

Elsie to her father, as she led the way towards it.

She was longing to be alone in some such retirement to collect her thoughts, and, perhaps, to pray. Upon reaching the door of the oratory, she started in momentary surprise at seeing a man kneeling in prayer, in whom, though his back was turned, she recognized Mr. Winslow. She had not the courage or resolution to follow his example, and turned aside lest she should interrupt him by her presence.

As they descended the mountain, she lingered behind her father and his guide, and, believing herself unobserved, paused before the supposed resting-place of the Holy family, and acknowledged to herself that it was a relief to turn from the objects of that sublime place to Him who commenced His revelation in such lowliness of love.

She had almost felt tempted to kneel for a

moment before that grotto, but was arrested by the sound of footsteps. It was Herbert Lisle, who saw her lingering at the spot.

"I think you are right, Mr. Lisle," she said, as he approached her: "this shrine of Humility and Love is very pleasant to contemplate after the thoughts of the Mount."

"You acknowledge that?"

"You were hard upon me just now, I think," she returned: "you were, perhaps, thinking of our conversation at Branston-Park, last autumn?"

"Then, may I hope I was wrong in presuming that the cross continues to have no place in your system? By-the-bye, will you allow me to ask after your sisterhood?"

"I left it at my friends' request. They tempted me away by the allurements of Karnak and Jerusalem, and I scarcely repent having left hard work in dingy London for contemplation on mount Sinai."

"Perhaps the practical may be the gainer by these moments of calm reflection," returned Lisle.

"I don't know ! Last night I was longing to transport all my infant establishment into this beautiful desert, and to spend my life in dreaming here."

"You have not answered my question," rejoined Herbert : "I want to know whether your sisterhood has made any progress in the points which we once discussed, or whether it is still wanting in any such shrine of Humility and Love as that which we have passed ?"

"We shall never understand each other," replied Elsie, who was too proud to acknowledge how entirely she really comprehended what he said : "I trust we have the spirit of love amongst us."

"But not the *icon* of which you were speaking just now ?"

"Did you encamp in Wady Ozaita ?" en-

quired Elsie, as if a sudden thought occurred to her.

"Yes—by the wells of Elim."

"And did you lose an icon, by any chance, or rather, a plain agate cross?"

"Yes, from my watch."

"Is it this?"

"I am tempted to say no."

"Why?"

"That you may keep it, Miss Seymour."

"I probably require it more than you; but I do not like to keep it."

"Pray keep it."

"I was alone by the wells of Elim and found this cross like an answer to my prayer," said Elsie, in a musing tone, and then continued: "but if I keep it, I will give you back the chain. Are you quite sure you do not want it yourself?"

"I have another. Pray keep it as a recollection of that prayer in the wilderness."

"Thank you—I almost think I will keep it. Here is the chain. I am extremely obliged."

Elsie said this in an indifferent tone of voice as if to show Herbert that she did not accept his present as a token from himself, but for the sake of the circumstances under which she had found the cross.

"You may become an admirer of the symbol," muttered Herbert: "and may make it the badge of your association. Who knows?"

Elsie sighed as she replied:

"Ah! who knows? But we must go faster, for they are far in front of us."

"No, see. They are stopping talking to some one. I think I must leave you and go back in search of my uncle, for he is not with them."

Upon turning a corner of the zig-zag descent they came upon Mr. Seymour and his guides, and found the former in conversation with Morden and Elliott, who were only now

ascending the mountain. Herbert Lisle having bowed to his fair companion, endeavoured to escape unobserved, while Elsie went forward to address her fellow travellers.

"You were very early this morning," said Elliott. "Finding you were gone, we lionized the convent, and saw everything before we started."

"Were you pleased?" she enquired.

"Oh, yes! you should ask Morden, for he has made great allies of the monks."

"Yes, I have been drinking araki with them, and have promised them some bitter ale. Jolly fellows! However, it is a slow life for them, no doubt! I would not pass my existence here for something, I know."

"You would not get any good shooting, I should think," replied Elsie, in a half-satirical, half-contemptuous voice.

"No, not even desert partridges, I should fancy."

"Or quails?"

"No, they seem to be extinct now."

"Why, of course, my dear fellow," said Elliott, laughing: "they were only sent for the Israelites, who must have thought it a miracle to find them in such a place."

"Oh, ah, yes—I remember. No great loss to these monks though, for they tell me they eat no meat from one year's end to another."

"You are carrying your drawing-book, I see," remarked Elsie to Frank, desiring to change the conversation.

"Is not the scenery striking?" returned the other. "Although, perhaps, too much wanting in vegetation and repose, it is certainly very grand."

"Wanting in vegetation!" thought Elsie, as she recalled her happy interview with Lisle.

"I think repose is scarcely what one seeks or expects on Mount Sinai," she replied: "you know, Mr. Lisle, I think? he is here with his uncle."

"So I have just heard from our dragoman !
Have you met him ?"

"Yes, he is on the mountain."

Frank felt rather jealous of Herbert, as of one likely to interfere between himself and Elsie, and yet, a moment's reflection would have sufficed to show him upon how slender a foundation rested his own hopes."

They parted, and Elsie returned to her convent cell, where, amidst her journal and letter-writing, she found time to recall the impressions of the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INSPIRATIONS OF HOREB.

BETWEEN Sinai and Mount St. Katharine lies a deep ravine, flanked by the red granite of which the adjacent mountains are composed. This valley, which exhibits the same appearance of convulsión as most of the rocks in the locality, is wonderfully beautiful, being enlivened by the olive garden of the Convent of the Forty Martyrs, which is situated at some distance up the gorge. This monastery is at present uninhabited, and the garden cultivated by the monks of St. Katharine's. The graceful and airy peak of Gebel Katerin overshadows this deserted shrine and served, in days of yore, to remind the ascetics who dwelt within

its walls of that beautiful legend of which the Düsseldorf painter has created an image known to all; for it is related that when the blessed saint was martyred, during the great persecution of Alexandria, the angels transported her body over land and sea, to the summit of that glorious crag, whence it was afterwards removed to the present shrine of St. Katharine at Mount Sinai.

The ascent of Gebel Katerin presents far greater difficulties than its rival, Gebel Moossa, as it is not only considerably higher, but also far more precipitous. On the day following that of his unexpected meeting with Miss Seymour, Herbert had started from the convent long before sunrise, in the company of his uncle, whom he had left at the monastery of the Forty Martyrs, while he performed a feat which promised to reward him by a prospect of the whole Sinaitic peninsula.

They were accompanied by a single Arab guide, who ascended with Lisle, while Arthur

Winslow, who was not equal to such an excursion, remained alone in the deserted convent, of which he had obtained the keys from Mount Sinai.

The hours of solitude had not seemed long to the old man, when his nephew, at length, returned.

"Well, Herbert, you have had warm work of it, I expect. You look fagged."

"Ah! but I have been well repaid. The view is past description."

"I suppose you get more of a map than from Mount Sinai?"

Herbert replied in the affirmative and, after explaining, from a sketch, some of the features of the panorama, continued—

"And how have you passed your time? I am afraid you must have been wearied to death."

"Not I. I could have spun out a few hours more, at a stretch."

"Well, I think you'll end by turning hermit, I declare!"

"I am sure it would suit my tastes best, if I could reconcile it to my conscience. I would willingly spend my life in this old convent and its beautiful chapel. Have you seen it?"

Herbert accompanied his uncle to inspect the simple chapel, of which, like in all those of the Eastern Church, the sacarium is partitioned off by a wooden screen, upon the panels of which are sacred pictures of our blessed Lord and His saints.

"Have you been here all the time of my absence?" enquired Herbert, when they came out.

"Some time; but I have wandered about and have read a good deal."

"You certainly seem inclined to the solitary life, uncle. Who would have supposed it to be your vocation?"

"I wish almost I could believe it right; but

I am convinced that modern anchorets ought to seek their wilderness in the dark, smoky towns, at home, rather than in this glorious desert, while there are so many millions of perishing souls to save."

"I fear you are right," replied Herbert, with a sigh. "And yet, if so, were all those holy men of old—the hermit-saints—in error? There were populous towns and numbers of unconverted heathen in the world in their days."

"That very thought struck me this morning as I knelt in the church, praying for strength and resolution for the dark future. I treated it as a temptation of Satan, and yet now you suggest it again. Cannot you answer it for me?"

"Well," said Herbert, reflecting, "I suppose the fact is that holy men of all ages have been liable to occasional mistakes, as if to show that the component parts of the church militant are, at the best, imperfect. Sanctity does not

ever seem to have guaranteed men from mistakes. I am sure our English divines of the days of Charles the First were holy men, and yet they certainly made grievous mistakes by their erastianism. Take all the saints of the calendar, almost, and it is the same story. For my part, I quite believe in the holiness of Saint Dominic, and yet, notwithstanding Mde. Lacordaire's defence of him, I cannot suffer him to escape all blame on the score of the Albigenses' persecution. Relying upon the secular arm has been a great error of holy men, even down to our own day, far greater, no doubt, than giving up active work for calm contemplation."

"But then, Herbert, do you mean to say that you exclude the contemplative life altogether?"

"Well, perhaps I am going too far. There are some few men and women who may be allowed it, but, even then, I do not like it to be undertaken to the exclusion of all active

work. Else what becomes of our Lord's teaching in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew for instance? Might not the Judge say to these anchorets, speaking in the name of the neglected poor in towns, '*I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat,*' and so on?"

"Yes, it seems evident that we ought not to be anchorets now-a-days, excepting for a season. Our Lord gives us the example of a temporary retreat into solitude."

"It will be strange," said Herbert, "if this visit to the mount of ancient revelation, should give rise to a religious association for the evangelizing of our part of Christendom."

"How so? I don't understand you!"

"No,—oh no! I will explain, if you promise to keep my secret. The young lady you saw yesterday, Miss Seymour, has helped to establish a kind of latitudinarian sisterhood in London, for the purpose of nursing the sick. It is already in activity, and she deserves great praise, I am sure, for her share in

the good work, but it is wanting in the one thing needful."

"Exactly, and you are hoping she may be led to find that one blessed treasure here."

"I want her to escape from legal bondage at the very fountain-head of the old law."

"It is precious to think that the reign of grace includes within its bounds the very mount Sinai in Arabia which St. Paul cites as the source and centre of bondage. Oh! that she might be led to seek Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life! To think that this time last year I had not the remotest knowledge of my Saviour, and was without a single ray of hope. There is one thing, dear Herbert, that many earnest, good people, seem to me rather timid, or even mistaken, about. I mean their unwillingness to admit the possibility, or likelihood, of a sudden conversion like mine."

"But, would you have them preach sudden conversion, do you think? I am quite willing to admit the fact. But is it not rare?"

"No, I don't believe it. The more I dwell upon the marvellous love of God, in bringing me suddenly—for it was most sudden—to a knowledge of Himself, and opening to me the way of life by a saving faith in Jesus, the more convinced I become, that such dealings must be within the ordinary workings of His providence towards sinners, and, if so, it becomes a duty to announce the fact, or, as you would call it, to preach sudden conversion."

"To preach conversion, I quite agree, must be right," said Lisle.

"Ay," rejoined Winslow: "and it must be very often sudden. Look at St. Paul, the Eunuch, the thief upon the cross, the jailer at Philippi, Dionysius the Areopagite, indeed almost every instance in scripture. It stands to reason, in the case, either of the heathen, or of those notorious sinners, who, like myself, have long trampled under foot their baptismal covenant, that the Grace of God would usually

act suddenly in a moment. The veil is withdrawn in a second, and the soul reconciled through the blood of Christ, and made, by a miracle, to feel the marvel of God's love."

While they pursued their conversation it was growing late, and the westering sun reminded them that it was time to hasten homewards. When they came to the junction of the four valleys, the Wadies, Moossa, Raha, Sheikh, and Rephidim, they saw before them the party of their fellow-countrymen from the convent, among whom was Elsie. They were walking slowly, so that Lisle and Winslow soon came up with them.

"We have been examining the wonders of these valleys," said Elsie.

"And that strange piece of humbug—the mould for the golden-calf," added her father.

"It is more like a jack-ass," rejoined Morden.

Lisle was silent, for, whatever he might

think of the so-called smelting place of the Israëlitish idol, he did not feel inclined to ridicule.

"Mr. Elliott has been sketching," remarked Elsie, who, seeing Herbert's eyes fixed upon her drawing-book, added—"mine are merely recollections for myself. Here they are!"

"Edfoo, Esnèh, Erment! I see," said Lisle, turning over the pages: "is not the desert charming after the Nile?"

"Well, I confess I begin to think the Israëlites made a happy exchange," replied Elsie.

"And yet they always pined after Egypt."

"Yes, and how completely the modern mode of travel confirms the scriptural comparison. In our Nile-boat, I am sure, we had every luxury, and such easy dewàns, et-cetera, whereas here, we are jolted from morning to night on a dromedary. I am sure my father sighs for the flesh-pots of Egypt sometimes—don't you, papa?"

"It is hard work ; but one gets into better condition for it after the first few days. I do not find it all *couleur de rose* on mount Sinai, for last night I was bitten to death."

"That looks more like the plagues of Egypt!" said Herbert; "I fancied the convent was exempt from that evil."

Both Frank and Morden exclaimed against Lisle's supposition.

Thus engaged in talking, they returned towards the monastery of St. Katharine. Elsie, seeing Mr. Winslow walking apart, kindly addressed some remarks to him which led to an interesting conversation upon the sacred localities. In the meanwhile Herbert had asked to look at Frank's drawings. He had already seen him and heard of his sister's illness.

"When we met you in London you had not decided upon your tour, I suppose?" enquired Frank, who had, perhaps, forgotten the subsequent death of Herbert's father.

"Let me see, that was in September, I

think. It was soon after that that I lost my poor father, and determined upon coming abroad with my uncle. I started before November."

"We did not leave England until quite the end of November. You have not been up the Nile, I conclude?"

"Not above Cairo. We spent Christmas at Bethlehem and then came on to Cairo, where we remained for a few weeks before setting out for the desert. We are now going back to Jerusalem, and hope to be there for Holy week. We leave this to-morrow morning."

"We are not going until the next day," said Frank. "So I fear we shall not have the pleasure of travelling together."

Frank was perhaps pleased to think that Lisle would not be present to absorb Elsie's conversation, although he did not dread his influence over her as he would have done Montagu's.

They had now reached the convent which they were allowed to re-enter through the garden.

"How is this?" asked Morden. "I suppose the rope and *pulley* is a kind of complimentary way of receiving strangers. I think Miss Seymour would gladly have been excused the *cordial* reception, but I believe they merely did it to *pulley* us."

"Now, don't give us a whole *string* of puns," returned Frank, half-ashamed of the mild attempt.

While they were walking in the garden, Herbert joined Miss Seymour.

"We went this morning into the chapel of the 'burning bush,'" said Elsie: "I don't know why people should be so severe upon the holy sites. The more I think of them the more it appears to me that they are the necessary consequence of an historical religion. If people believe in the history of the burning bush upon mount Horeb, why should not they have

localised it, as they do the tower where Amy Robsart was cast down, or the dungeon in Berkeley Castle where Edward the Second was murdered, or the blood of Rizzio in Holyrood? The preservation of supposed localities certainly adds interest to history and still more, one should fancy, to sacred history."

"Well done, Miss Seymour; I quite agree with you, but scarcely expected you would allow so much."

"You fancy me prejudiced?"

"I will not indulge in a *tu quoque*, however I may feel inclined," rejoined Herbert.

"You mean that we both think each other prejudiced?" replied Elsie.

"It may be so, in some degree. I ought not, perhaps, to call *you* so," said Lisle.

"Yes, I am convinced you do," answered Miss Seymour, laughing: "you think me a heretic!"

"Invincible ignorance is not always pre-

judice in the sense in which the word is generally used," he added.

"Invincible ignorance ! yes, that *must* be prejudice. Invincible means closed to conviction, and I am sure I am the more open to it of the two. Confess that in your heart you think there is more chance of my changing to your views, than you to mine ?"

This was a very home thrust to Herbert, for he did indulge a secret hope of Elsie's conversion and prayed for it daily.

"Yes—I will confess it," he said, after a moment's pause.

"Nothing could change you ?"

"No."

"In fact, you have barred all the avenues to your convictions, and your opinions are now unassailable."

"Upon one subject."

"Yes, upon religion. Oh ! I don't mean your Derbyite predilections. Mr. D'Israeli will soon cure you of those !" pursued Elsie, in the same tone of irony.

"The way once chosen, I confess that the avenue is closed, as you say. But *there* is the difference; your convictions are still unsettled simply because you have not stranded them upon an infallible authority, such as that of Divine revelation."

"It sounds tempting," returned Elsie: "but is it true?"

"You confess that it is desirable! You will soon become convinced that it is true."

They were joined by Mr. Seymour and soon after, Elsie retired to her cell. Adjoining her apartment was one of the numerous little chapels which are scattered about the convent of mount Sinai. In this oratory, where no one seemed to intrude, she was able to collect her thoughts and meditate upon mysteries, which she began to feel were full of consolation and subjective beauty, even, if, as she had taught herself to believe, not the very truth

itself. As she knelt in silence before the emblem of the Redeemer, the words of Lisle recurred to her memory and she almost longed that her convictions might, in truth, become stranded upon some rock of infallibility.

CHAPTER VIII.

TERRA SANCTA.

DURING the next few weeks of her pilgrimage Elsie felt more light-hearted and happy than she had done for several months. The weather was very hot during the day, but the cold nights invigorated the travellers for their long marches. Elliott and Morden continued to be their only companions, for Lisle and his uncle had pressed forward to Jerusalem by a shorter route.

In the dark defiles of the beautiful Wady El Eyn, upon the shore of the transparent waters of Akaba, on the sand rocks of Mount Seir, among the rose-coloured temples of Petra,

Elsie omitted not, from time to time, to gaze upon the agate cross and to open her heart in prayer. When she ascended the heights of Mount Hor and visited the tomb of Aaron she longed to escape the flippant remarks of Morden, and contemplate the death-place of the prophet in silence.

After undergoing quarantine at Hebron Elsie found herself mounted on a horse, instead of a dromedary, and proceeding at a fleet pace towards Bethlehem.

"The fields of Bethlehem and the granite rocks of Sinai," she thought "are well suited to typify the two covenants of which they witnessed the origin!"

The hills, on quitting Hebron, were mostly covered with ilex, systus and dwarf pine, interspersed with flowering herbs. Suddenly, after leaving those vast water-tanks called the Pools of Solomon, she caught the first glimpse of Bethlehem Judah. Another short interval brought them into a region of partial cultiva

tion, where in days of yore, were the corn-fields in which Ruth gleaned for Naömi, the pastures where David tended his father's flocks, and, more glorious than all, the hills where the shepherds, keeping watch by night, beheld the heavenly host. Was ever ground more consecrated by reminiscences of the past ?

It is sometimes easier to realise small events than great ones and, to Elsie's mind, it was a relief to think of the Moabitess who had deserted the mountains beyond the Dead Sea, which she could perceive to her right, to follow her aged mother-in-law in order that the Bethlehemites might become her people, and *the Bethlehemite* her God !

The greatest marvel of Bethlehem Judah was scarcely within her grasp. It is true that she had striven, two months before, to realise the mystery of Philoe and, in the supposed tomb of Osiris, had sought to comprehend the pantheism of Egypt. She piqued herself upon the flexibility of her sympathies and yet now,

when the fields were around her and the town before her eyes, where the greatest of all wonders was accomplished, she felt bewildered by the effort to imagine it.

She came, as worse than a neophyte, to the shrine of the Babe of Bethlehem. To the Christian, who has experienced His love, it may be hard to embrace the magnitude of the thought that he is on the very spot of earth where the Creator of the worlds became incarnate, yet he must ever feel a thrill of joy when he ponders for a moment upon the glad tidings of Bethlehem.

"The inhabitants of Bethlehem are all Christians, and where else should they be, if not there? Was He not descended from a long line of Bethlehemites?"

Elsie pondered thus in silence, for she cared not to say much to her father, or to Frank Elliott.

The latter varied in his attentions to her, always admiring, but sometimes discouraged by the exceeding coldness which she could assume.

The fact is that she now felt a greater repugnance to him than even to the far less cultivated Fred Morden, who was more openly absurd and boyish, but Elliott's very education made his want of feeling upon certain points the more manifest.

They had seen the cave of Bethlehem and were proceeding over the eight miles of road which lie between that town and Jerusalem. Elsie had remained silent, having endeavoured, as much as possible, to place her father as a barrier between their fellow-travellers and herself. However, as they descended the hill from the City of the Nativity and were taking a last glimpse of the stately buildings of the convent, Frank slipped round to her side and forced her into conversation.

"Were you disappointed with Bethlehem?" he asked.

"No. It was nearly as I expected."

"The country is very tame, though."

"I had always heard it so described and am agreeably surprised. Those mountains of the Dead Sea form a lovely distance."

"Well, that is true. I took a sketch of them from the convent. I think, however, that the exhibitions in the monastery are highly improbable."

"You mean the site of the murder of the Innocents and such like. I see no improbability in the Cave, I must confess. I believe it is almost the best authenticated and oldest traditional site of any in Palestine."

"Do you really?"

"It has St. Jerome's authority."

"He may have been deceived."

"No doubt, but a tradition which can be distinctly traced to his time is, at all events, venerable."

Whether or not she believed what she argued, she loathed the spirit which prompted Elliott's criticisms. To her mind they seemed

to show an absence of sympathy in the associations, and she shrank within herself at being so utterly misunderstood.

In a few minutes, after losing sight of Bethlehem, they caught the first view of Jerusalem.

The square city with its walls and the hills around it, was almost exactly what Elsie knew it to be, and yet, to behold the earthly Sion, could not but affect her woman's heart and bring the tears, for a moment, to her eyes.

"Well, I *am* disappointed!" exclaimed Morden.

"Wait, perhaps it will look better as we approach," said Frank, in a conciliatory tone, and glancing towards Elsie.

Her eyes were intently fixed upon the castellated walls and her lips slightly apart. She looked more beautiful than he had ever seen her, for a soft spiritual expression seemed to hover over her features and to render her more like some saint of Fra Angelico than the

heathen goddess to whom she was sometimes compared.

Poor Frank was deeply smitten with her beauty, and would have given worlds to make some impression upon her heart, but the fact is that he felt as if it were inaccessible to him, for although he had travelled with her for so many weeks he did not seem to have advanced a single step in winning her affections. He was clever and even reflective, but had not any very decided opinions and it therefore scarcely amounted to inconsistency when, upon the discovery of her pantheistic tendencies, which he had mistaken for scepticism, he had rather stretched his conscience to endeavour to sympathise with her. He did not know that Elsie's pantheism was as much tinctured with enthusiasm as the ardent aspirations of the mystic and that she had no more real sympathy with cavilling incredulity than the most earnest votaries of faith. He had foolishly fancied that she might accept latitude in religion as

a step towards her broader views, not perceiving that the breadth which she sighed after was to be found only in unity, not in a mere agreement to differ.

It was Maundy Thursday and, as they threaded the narrow streets, they met a crowd returning from Gethsemane. Almost before she had noticed him, Lisle stood by her side.

"Miss Seymour! I am delighted that you are come in time to see a part of the ceremonies of this week."

Herbert was cordially greeted by Elsie and her father.

"I hope your uncle is well?" she enquired.

"Yes but he is so engrossed that I am sometimes afraid he will make himself ill. He is still in the garden of Gethsemane intent upon the subject of the day."

"How you must both have enjoyed this week!" replied Elsie.

Frank wondered at her enthusiasm upon

these subjects and was more and more perplexed to make her out.

Lisle and his uncle were at the Latin convent, but Mr. Seymour and his friends went to a species of hotel, kept by a Maltese.

During the next few days Lisle was frequently in the society of the Seymours. Elsie was indefatigable in sight-seeing and witnessing the ceremonies. Her chamber, at the hotel, opened upon a flat roof and, from it, she had a view of a great part of the town with its round domes on every house and its piles of ruins in all directions.

On Good Friday she trod the Via Dolorosa and knelt in the chapel of Mount Calvary and on Easter-Eve, while her father and Herbert stood without, she entered alone into the Holy Sepulchre, and kissed the Saviour's tomb.

After the great events of Easter morn, Mr. Seymour and his daughter were with Herbert in the court facing the church of the Holy

Sepulchre, that court which, like the entrance to the ancient temple, is filled with all kinds of sacred merchandize for pilgrims visiting the holy places.

"Have you bought many memorials of Jerusalem?" enquired Elsie,

"A few. I am rather given to collecting curiosities."

"I think I am not," said Elsie, "at least I only care for those souvenirs, which tell a tale of their own."

"Such as a cross?" ventured Herbert.

"Exactly."

"We are going with the pilgrims to the Jordan and the Dead Sea on Tuesday. I hope you will come?"

Mr. Seymour agreed. The interval was spent among the various localities in and around, the Holy City and, on the morning of Easter Tuesday, they prepared to start for the Jordan.

Passing along the Way of Sorrows they issued

through St. Mary's-gate, into the valley of Jehosaphat, and pursued their way towards the village of Bethany.

"Do you remember our discussion last autumn?" enquired Elsie, of Herbert.

"When you gave me so—" hesitated Lisle.

"Yes, when I shocked you so," said she.

"Oh! Miss Seymour."

"Yes, I am convinced that you were horrified beyond measure at my views. But strange to say, that Bethany entered into our arguments and, even then, I was longing to choose the better part with Mary!"

"I remember you defended contemplation, and spoke of Martha and Mary!"

"I dare say you were surprised to hear me take that side?"

"I was; considering the views you held."

"Held?"

"I hope you hold them no longer?"

"I fancy so."

"They are irreconcilable with the last few days of your life !" exclaimed Herbert.

"How so ? May I not *feel* and *sympathise* ? In the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, and in the Halls of Philœ, I felt the inspirations of the places."

"Did you ?" and Herbert sighed.

They were entering Bethany and the guide pointed to the tomb of Lazarus, where Arthur Winslow had already dismounted. Lisle asked Elsie whether she would follow his example, but became more silent and thoughtful as they left the traditionary scene of Our Lord's miracle.

"You are pained at what I said, but are you not too hard upon me, Mr. Lisle ?"

"Oh no, how do you mean ?" enquired Herbert, surprised at her apologetic tone.

"You will not accept agreement ?"

"Agreement, yes !"

"You will not give and take ?"

"No—I cannot. Your principle is not that of oneness in Faith, but compromise."

"On my side there is no compromise," said Elsie.

"And how do you reconcile the cross with Sultan Hassan and Philœ? How can you worship on Mount Calvary, and turn to the Mekenah of the false prophet?"

"Faith is a purifier of the heart that believes," rejoined Elsie, "and an influence, in a great measure, independent of the object to which it is directed."

"Humanly speaking, there is truth in your theory. There is certainly a natural faith which gives a tone to the believing heart, independent of its object, one may almost say, but this is not the Christian's faith, which is a supernatural effect of the divine grace, given by God to His elect."

Elsie relapsed into silence, and their further conversation was interrupted by their being

unexpectedly overtaken by Morden and Elliott.

The day was very sultry, and Frank was suffering from a head-ache and pain in his limbs, but seemed determined to go forward. They passed along the desolate valley leading to Jericho, where the traveller fell among thieves, and was relieved at a Khan, (of which there are now no traces on that desert road,) by the Good Samaritan.

At length they came into the great plain of Jordan, and encamped for the night, at Eyn Sultaun, the Diamond of the Desert, rendered familiar to all by the opening scene of Sir Walter Scott's *Talisman*.

Near to the clear fountain, by which their tents were pitched, were a luxuriant wood and several architectural remains. The perpendicular rocks to the west of the once fertile plain are honey-combed with tombs, and form a habitation for large flights of cranes and bitterns.

Elsie had left her tent to contemplate the prospect, when she was joined by Lisle, who, even at those moments, when he was most strongly convinced that she was unsuited to him, felt drawn to her by a magical attraction.

"Poor Elliott seems very ill!" he said.

"I thought he looked so on the journey. Do you mean to say it is anything serious?"

"I am afraid it is fever."

"Have you seen him?"

"I have just been with him. Mr. Morden says he shall remain with him at present. I wish there were any means of sending for a doctor."

"Could not you send to Jerusalem? One of our Armenians might go. Shall I write for one?"

"I don't remember his name, but I will write to the consul's," replied Lisle.

Poor Elliott passed a wretched night, and was delirious in the morning.

The ground selected for their encampment

was not favourable to his complaint, and Herbert, who sat up all night with him, was doubtful whether it would not be more prudent to attempt his removal in a litter. The hot sun rendered the tent almost insufferable, and Morden, who had taken Herbert's place by the invalid, was, himself, suffering from a bad head-ache.

"Tell me, papa, how he seems?" enquired Elsie, anxiously, of her father, as he came from the tent towards the middle of the day.

"Very ill. I am almost glad now, that I complied with your request not to go on to the Jordan, although we might have returned this evening.

"But, tell me, papa, who is with him?" asked Elsie, eagerly.

"Morden, and he is wearied out. Poor Lisle sat up with him all night."

"Papa, let me go and sit with him?"

"My darling—what are you thinking of!"

"Thinking, papa? Why, I am thinking

that I am a nurse, and that I ought to go. Do let me!"

"I won't hear of it."

"My dear father, I would not displease you for the world, but I do think that in this desert, with no woman near, and a person actually delirious with fever, conventionalities might be laid aside."

"Well, my darling, I don't know what to say, but I cannot think you are prudent."

"Here is Mr. Lisle coming, let me ask him, papa? Do you see any harm," she pursued, addressing Herbert, as he entered, "in my sitting in poor Mr. Elliott's tent?"

He was at a loss how to reply. When he looked at the beautiful and delicately nurtured girl before him, he thought he had never seen any one so little fitted for such a duty, and, on the other hand, he knew of her love for nursing the sick, and could imagine her ability to undertake the task. His own principles were strongly in favour of women devoting

themselves to those high duties, notwithstanding any worldly conventionalities to the contrary, but, when it came to be a question of his adored Elsie Seymour's sitting by Frank Elliott, in his tent, it required more than human philosophy to overcome his repugnance to the proposition. However, perceiving her inclination, he battled with himself.

"Poor Elliott is very ill—almost insensible ! I don't think there can be any harm in your going to see him, or even to sit with him."

He felt repaid for this victory over himself by a look of thanks from Elsie.

"Come with me, papa," she rejoined, "or perhaps you had better go in front?"

She had gained her point, as usual, and Mr. Seymour rather reluctantly preceded her. The sun's rays pierced the canvass, and rendered the air perfectly suffocating. Elsie at once suggested ventilation by raising the sides, and, calling in the assistance of the dragoman, soon obtained a draught of air. The only remedies

which had been attempted were lemonade and some cooling powders, which Herbert had found in his medicine chest. Elsie perceived that he needed something more, and ventured upon administering a mixture from her own store. She saw that his state of excitement and high fever needed lowering, and foresaw that the doctor would probably even go beyond what she could attempt. Her woman's tact discovered more than all his *quasi* doctors had been able to find out, and feminine care and order soon became manifest.

Upon first entering the tent she found Frank in a state of wandering, and it was not until she had approached the draught to his lips that he seemed to become sensible of her presence. From that moment he grew calmer whenever she drew near to his bed.

It was towards five o'clock, when, in answer to the message, an Italian doctor came from Jerusalem. He brought leeches to bleed the patient. His pharmacopœia was of the simplest

kind, the chief remedy being the malow, of which he concocted a poultice for the leech bites, and an effusion as a cordial. The plant grew in abundance in the vicinity of the tents, so that there was no difficulty in following his prescriptions in this respect. He strongly dissuaded their attempting the patient's removal in his present condition, but offered to send a covered litter from Jerusalem in order that this might be effected, a few days hence.

During the doctor's visit Elsie availed herself of the evening air for a walk. The great plain of the Jordan, that fertile district of the promised land which Moses beheld from mount Nebo, still shows signs of its ancient renown. The country between Eyn Sultaun and the Jordan is thickly covered with brushwood, interspersed with patches of barley belonging to the fellahs of the villages, the largest of which is the mud-built village of Jericho, occupying the site of the ancient city, so conspicuous in sacred writ. Between Jericho and Jordan is

the well of Elisha, the same, according to tradition, which he sweetened when he returned from witnessing the ascension of Elijah.

Elsie set off with her father, but found that it would be vain to endeavour to reach Jericho. They were joined by Herbert upon their return.

"My uncle is gone to the Jordan. I prevailed upon him to go, as I thought he could be of no use here, and I know he is most anxious to see it. If possible, he will proceed to the Dead Sea and the convent of St. Saaba, where he proposes sleeping to night."

"And you remain?"

"I don't like leaving poor Elliott at present. The doctor thinks very ill of him."

"He is not gone, I hope. I should like to see him."

Elsie had a conference with the Hakim, and skilfully discovered his real opinion of the patient's case. When he left, she returned to her task of nursing, and was in and out of his tent until a late hour of the night.

The days spent at Eyn Sultaun, unvaried excepting by an expedition which Elsie was able to make to the Jordan, would have appeared dreadfully monotonous, but that her unwearied attentions at the sick bed were relieved, from time to time, by pleasant conversations with Herbert Lisle.

There was a moment when they despaired of Elliott's life, and even when the fever began to subside, his strength was so prostrated, that he seemed himself to fancy that he could not recover. As he became capable of attending, Herbert profited by his hours of watching, to lead the patient's thoughts to the subject of religion.

"Do you think I shall die?" asked poor Frank one morning.

"No, not now ; you are getting better," replied Herbert.

"I have been very ill, and I am very weak."

"Thank God, the worst is past, I trust. I did not think you would have got over it."

"Oh, really. I don't think I was prepared to die."

"Death looks very terrible when you are not ready to meet it," returned Herbert. "It is as well to be prepared at all times, for it comes so unexpectedly."

"Oh! how fearful!" exclaimed Elliott, with a sigh: "so few of us are ready for it."

"It is each one of us singly that it takes. No clinging to others can help us when salvation is in question. There seems a great isolation in death."

"Just the very terror which came over me one night!" said Frank. "It seemed to be such an awful solitude!"

"You see you want faith," replied Lisle: "it would not be a solitude if you had faith to perceive the presence of your Saviour."

"Well, I thought of that, but I have no faith. How can I have faith?"

"You can pray for it. If you ask God, He will give it to you."

"Would you mind praying for me?"

"No. I will pray that God may give you a sure trust in Him, for His dear Son's sake."

Elliott seemed to derive some comfort from Lisle's conversation, but it is possible that Elsie's presence diverted his thoughts from that continued prayer which might have confirmed his heart in faith and reliance upon his Saviour. He looked forward with intense anxiety for the hour when she should come to visit him, and watched her movements as she arranged the few articles of furniture. It seemed as if an angel were ministering to him, and he felt a thrill of delight, if, when she approached the medicine to his lips, her hand chanced to touch them. If, during this stage of depression and weakness, he happened to fall asleep, and awoke while she was still there, her presence came upon him like some vision of paradise, of which he might have dreamed, but which he never seriously hoped to realize. He had long admired her as something distant and unapproach-

able, but now he saw her actually ministering to him in his sickness.

During the morning which followed Herbert's conversation, he appeared to suffer from a return of feverish symptoms, and was very restless. At length he fell asleep, but the heat of the day interrupted his slumbers, and, when he awoke, he saw Elsie sitting at his table writing. He remained perfectly still watching her every movement until, looking round, she discovered that he was no longer dozing. She had been waiting to give him a cooling draught which he took and thanked her.

"Should you like me to read to you?" she enquired, "or can you sleep again? I think sleep would do you most good."

"I am afraid I can't sleep."

"I will read to you for a little while."

She took up a book which lay beside her upon the table, and read an amusing account of a traveller's adventures in Central Asia. Whatever it might have been, it was certain to

interest Elliott, whose whole attention was concentrated upon the beautiful reader.

"Is it good to go on reading so long?" asked Mr. Seymour anxiously, as he came into the tent.

"Papa, he cannot sleep in this heat. But I have finished reading now."

"He is better, I suppose?" continued her father, who then turned to Elliott. "I hope you are really better to-day?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Papa, he is not really better," whispered Elsie: "don't you see how feverish he is? Look at his eyes."

"I am sure he might be removed in a good litter," rejoined her father in a half *sotto voce*, which the quick ears of the invalid were able to detect: "why could not he be conveyed in the night?"

"It would be a great risk."

"But do you mean to say that you want to go on staying here?" he enquired in the same

lowered voice, which he fancied was inaudible to Elliott.

"Only until he is out of danger."

"Well, then I insist upon your sending for the doctor again."

"Very well, papa. I think it would be better."

"I will sit here," said Mr. Seymour, "while you write to him."

Elsie, having her writing materials at hand, would not leave, but wrote her note in her father's presence.

Frank had heard the conversation, and was overjoyed at the part which she had taken in the contest, but felt jealous and slightly vexed at her father's evident wish to deprive him of her. His thoughts became more and more concentrated upon Elsie, whom his feverish imagination pictured as destined by providence for himself. As he recovered he felt still more under the influence of a passion for the divinity who had deigned to watch over his sick-bed,

and act the part of a sister, when no other female hand was near to tend him.

On the following evening the doctor came again and allowed his removal in a covered litter between two mules. He was to start the next night, so as to avoid the heat of the sun.

Lisle had been with the medical man, and came to deliver his report in Mr. Seymour's tent, where Elsie and her father were sitting in the twilight, the former being engaged in making up a packet of letters which they proposed sending to Jerusalem by the Italian physician.

"There is really no need of your remaining any longer," said Herbert: "I strongly advise your going off to-morrow morning to the Dead Sea and St. Saaba. I will promise to take good care of the patient, and see him safely conveyed to Jerusalem."

"Thank you Lisle!" exclaimed Mr. Seymour.

"I feel loath to give up my charge," said Elsie.

"How absurd, my darling," returned her father, "why, what good can you do?"

"I don't like deserting my post," rejoined Elsie.

"Nonsense, Elsie!"

For to say the truth, Mr. Seymour was thoroughly put out by being kept so many days in this uninteresting and unhealthy spot, and wished himself anywhere but at Jericho, of which they were in the immediate neighbourhood: "come! I suppose I may order the horses for six o'clock to-morrow morning," he continued, as he made his exit from the tent, and eagerly set off in search of his dragoman.

"But tell me, Mr. Lisle, do you think I am leaving him before he is out of danger?"

"No—besides Mr. Seymour is so tired of this place that I think you ought to go."

"I was wrong, perhaps, you will think, in seeming to resist my father's wishes—It is not always easy to weigh duties, and I may have

allowed enthusiasm to preponderate in the scale."

"Oh! Miss Seymour, do not think I ever ventured to criticize your conduct. Whatever I may have thought of your actions; I have never attributed them to any but the highest possible motives."

"What do you mean?" returned Elsie, who acutely detected his thought: "pray tell me what actions you mean?"

Herbert was embarrassed, but replied after a moment's hesitation:

"You mistake me, I think?"

"No."

"I have never blamed any actions of yours."

"Mr. Lisle, we are too old friends to conceal things from each other, and I will explain since you will not, what is passing in our thoughts. Papa evidently is vexed at what I have done, and perhaps, I was wrong in so

warmly insisting upon carrying out my nurse's office, when I found him strongly opposed to it. The fact is that I look upon myself as dedicated to nursing the sick and, over and over again, in the loneliness of my cabin, or in the sweet solitude of the desert, I have felt that, away from life's objects, I was pursuing an aimless existence. Here, at length, an opportunity of acting the good Samaritan seemed to offer, upon the very road from Jerusalem to Jericho. I was perhaps rather carried away by the enthusiasm of doing good, and I may have been wrong in urging my father to allow me to undertake a task so distasteful to him. But this is what I have done, and now tell me candidly your judgment upon my action? Do not be afraid to speak openly, because I know it is the judgment of a friend, and," she pursued in rather a lower voice, "a judgment which I value."

Herbert was in an ecstasy of delight. The

beautiful girl had not hesitated to constitute him a judge of her actions. How was he to answer such an appeal?

"I can give but one judgment. I never could have blamed or criticized your goodness in nursing the sick. If I did, I confess I was wrong. As to your father. I think the past was excusable, but I would strongly urge your complying with his request and wishes now. I am sure that Miss Seymour understands too well what is right in principle, not to be an excellent and devoted daughter. I only wish our view of faith was as similar as our recognition of virtue?"

"Who knows but what it may become so?"

"Do you preserve the cross?"

"Yes, here it is!"

"And its thought?"

"Not yet imprinted on my heart," returned Elsie with a sigh.

Herbert would have said more. His heart

was very full, and he saw Elsie's beautiful hand resting on the table by his side. He could have grasped it and said all; but, unluckily, at that very moment, Mr. Seymour returned and informed him that Fred Morden was seeking him.

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